



Whinney Banks Primary School

Attendance Policy and Procedures

(September 2020)

(To be reviewed September 2021)

During the lockdown period and school closure due to Covid-19 all attendance proceedings ceased and attendance became elective. From Tuesday 1st September (children are due to return to school on Thursday 3rd September) all school attendance is mandatory and parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their children attend school.

We place a high value on good attendance and punctuality and award certificates for full attendance each term and over the whole year. The school is committed to providing a full and efficient education for all pupils and this is made difficult if the children arrive late or are often absent. We, therefore, do all we can to ensure that children achieve maximum possible attendance and arrive at school on time each day.

The Head Teacher, Mrs Sandy Thorpe, holds the overview of attendance procedures within the school.

Mr Andy Grimes, Senior Leadership Team, leads on attendance issues within the school.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Parents are required by law to ensure that their children are educated and they can be prosecuted for their children's non-attendance at school, unless education is provided by other means.

Schools are required to keep detailed records of children's attendance at school. As part of this we are required to record all absences as unjustified or unauthorised unless parents give an adequate reason for them.

The law allows Head Teachers to consider individual requests to authorise a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. Parents are obligated to inform us if their children will be absent due to holiday and must complete a holiday form at least 2 school weeks in advance, available from the school office. Parents must include details of the exceptional circumstances for the holiday leave and the Head Teacher may make an appointment with the parent to discuss.

If the request for leave of absence is authorised by the Head Teacher, the expectation is that the child's attendance will be of a satisfactory level both prior to, and after, the date covered by the request.

If the request for leave of absence is refused and the absence is recorded as unauthorised, the Head Teacher may refer the matter to the Local Authority requesting a Penalty Notice to be issued.

ATTENDANCE V. ATTAINMENT

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Pupil's absence also disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring regular attendance at school is a legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without good reason creates an offence in law that may result in prosecution.

WHAT THE SCHOOL EXPECTS

It is, therefore very important that parents do everything possible to ensure that:

1. Their children attend school regularly.
2. Their children arrive on time (i.e. by 8:50 am and 12:50 pm)
3. They contact school whenever their child is unable to attend (including notifying the school of doctors, dental or other medical appointments). This should be done on each day of absence unless the school has said it is unnecessary.
4. Their children arrive well prepared for school (i.e. with their reading book, packed lunch, PE kit, swimming gear etc., as required).
5. Parents/Guardians should endeavour to arrange medical appointments outside of school hours. If their child has to leave school during a session to attend dental appointments etc., parents/guardians should notify the school to be granted permission for the child to leave the school. They must sign out at the office before leaving. If reasonable time is permitting, the child should return to school after the appointment.

WHAT PARENTS AND CHILDREN CAN EXPECT

The school will record and analyse attendance and lateness regularly using data monitoring software and implement any action necessary as a result of its findings. This is supported by a Data Technician who regularly analyses attendance data for different groups. Teachers are responsible for marking the SIMS register correctly, ensuring that every child has a mark (present (/) or absent (N)).

The school will follow clear procedures if a child fails to attend school regularly or often arrives late.

The school will encourage good attendance through a system of praise, certificates, rewards and celebrations.

Any child subject to a child protection plan or who has been identified as a persistent absentee or at risk of becoming a persistent absentee will receive an absence phone call from school on each day of absence. (See also, *Child Protection Policy*.)

UNDERSTANDING ABSENCE

Every half-day (one session) absence from school is to be classified as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing and may be added to a child's attendance record.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority (EWS) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- absences which have never been properly explained;
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark;
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays;
- holidays in term time; and
- excessive illness without medical evidence.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be 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 unhelpful for parents or carers to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and will usually result in the problem becoming worse.

Parents can support children's attendance by:

- ensuring regular and appropriate bed times;
- helping with homework;
- having uniform and equipment prepared the night before;
- providing a healthy breakfast;
- reporting any academic or social concerns promptly;
- retaining open & honest communication with the school; and
- being positive about school.

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 educational prospects and we require parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly with a half-termly review identifying targets for improvement. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully.

Procedures for persistent absenteeism:

1. PAs under 90% are assessed individually and causes of absence identified. Those without sufficient reason will have contact from school or Education Five.
2. Referral to Education Five, the school's Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) if child is considered to be at risk of becoming a persistent absentee.
3. EWO may contact parents via telephone, conduct a home visit and where concerns continue will commence legal intervention.

These procedures are flexible and may change depending on the needs of the individual case.

In all cases initial contact will be made by the school in the form of a letter, phone call or face to face conversation – the attendance co-ordinator to determine which is most appropriate.

Referral to EWO will always follow this procedure.

PERSISTENT LATENESS:

We recognise the detrimental effect that persistent lateness can have on learning and self-esteem. Lateness disorients the learner, disrupts the lesson, places high demands on teacher time where additional instructions and repetition of instructions are needed and results in other children missing out on teaching due to additional time needed for the person who was late.

For these reasons we will monitor the lateness recorded by pupils on a regular basis. For those that record a significant amount of lateness marks the following procedures will apply:

- School letter or phone call stating the amount of lateness, and its effects on learning.
- Request for a formal meeting with attendance lead to discuss the lateness.
- Referral to Educational Welfare Officer.
- Continued lateness marks may result in a fixed penalty notice being issued.

WHAT WILL THE SCHOOL DO IF CHILDREN REGULARLY ARRIVE LATE OR MISS SCHOOL?

Stage 1

Children will be marked late if they arrive in school after the register has been saved and closed.

Children arriving late without a valid reason and after the close of registers may be recorded as absent without authorisation for that session. 'Sleeping in' etc. is not considered to be a valid reason for lateness.

If a child is absent from school the class teacher or school administrator should be informed as to the reason why. This may be by personal contact, phone call or letter. All reasons given verbally will be recorded by the school administrator on SIMS. Any letters received in support of absence will be recorded on SIMS.

Children who do not arrive in school will be marked as absent without authorisation until an adequate reason is given for the absence. If no adequate reason for the absence is given, the absence will remain unauthorised.

Children who are persistently late (see above) will be contacted by the school informing them of the problem and offering a meeting to resolve the issue. Continuation of persistent lateness will result in referral to EWO.

Stage 2

The teachers, school administrators and SENDCO will monitor patterns of absence and lateness and raise concerns with the Head Teacher.

Stage 3

Statistics will be kept and children whose attendance falls below 90%, or is at risk of falling below 90%, will be identified. These children will form a target group. On the first day of absence parents will be contacted immediately by school staff and if necessary this will be followed by a home visit from the EWO service.

Stage 4 onwards

Where attendance or punctuality continues to be unsatisfactory, a programme of planned intervention according to the framework outlined by the EWO service will be pursued.

HOW WILL WE PROMOTE GOOD ATTENDANCE?

1. Provide a weekly draw with 2 pupils from Nursery, 1 pupil from Key Stage 1 and 1 pupil from Key Stage 2 awarded medals for 100% attendance the previous week. 1 pupil from KS1 and 1 pupil from KS2 will receive medals for 100% attendance and punctuality for the previous week.

2. Hold an attendance assembly at the end of each half term celebrating all children who have achieved 100% attendance and 100% punctuality for that period. All these children will be entered into prize draws.
3. Provide weekly updates for each class on individual children's attendance percentage.
4. Celebrate class groups' good attendance by awarding an Attendance Trophy to the class with the previous week's highest attendance percentage.
5. Reward '100%' attendance each term with certificate at end of term attendance assembly.
6. The 96% Club - Hold a celebration at the end of each term for children who have missed no more than a maximum of 9 days collectively (15 sessions – 96% overall attendance for year).
7. Reward 100% annual attendance with certificate and prize at end of year attendance assembly.