



## **Whinney Banks Primary School**

### **Attendance Policy and Procedures**

(September 2023)

(To be reviewed September 2024)

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 praise children for good attendance and punctuality throughout the 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 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.

## **TERM TIME HOLIDAY AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Under normal circumstances, all requests for holidays and leave of absence during term time will be refused. Any subsequent absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

**Five consecutive days of absence due to holiday will result in a fixed penalty notice being issued by the local authority.**

## **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 raising awareness of the impact of poor attendance. The school may also choose to celebrate high achievement in attendance.

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.

If a child records a total of 15 days of absence due to illness then they will be referred to the local authority.

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.

A pupil becomes 'severely absent' when they are present for less than 50% of their schooling. These pupils and their families will often require a multi-agency response in order to reengage them with their education.

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.

Children whose attendance has been identified as an issue will be asked to attend an early intervention Attendance Case Conference (ACC) in September in order to set out the procedures for attendance for the coming year. The ACC will also include a 4 week plan for improvement that will require a parent to sign (this will be considered a parenting contract).

*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 team will 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 disorientates 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?**

School begins at 8:50am. Pupils arriving late to between 8:50am and 9:20am will receive a 'L' mark on the register for being late. Receiving a 'L' code does not affect a child's attendance percentage.

Registers will close at 9:20am. Pupils arriving late to school after 9:20am will receive a 'U' code. This represents an unauthorised absence for this session and will affect a child's attendance percentage.

The following stages will be followed for children regularly arriving late to school.

### **Stage 1**

Children arriving late without a valid reason and after the close of registers will 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 SENCO 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.