



Whitley Abbey Primary School

Attendance Policy

Reviewed September 2021
Next Review September 2022

School Vision

At Whitley Abbey...

We aim for everyone to be valued, safe and happy.

We nurture the mental and physical wellbeing of our community.

We celebrate life experiences and enjoy sharing new ones together.

Through rich learning opportunities we help children to develop a love of learning.

We strive to open children's minds to life's possibilities.

Through the Whitley Core Values we develop kindness, friendship, courage, honesty, resilience and gratitude.

We are proud to have Team Whitley in our hearts.

Hand in hand we learn

Attendance Policy Introduction and Background

Whitley Abbey Primary School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to raising standards and pupil attainment.

This policy is written with the above statement in mind and this policy underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding
- ensure every pupil has access to the full time education to which they are entitled
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave school

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or later arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in a penalty notice being issued or prosecution.

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters
- Report to parents/carers annually on how their child's attendance with the annual School report.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual, class and school achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance through a range of reward systems organised by the leadership team and the Family Support Worker.

Understanding Types of Absence

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.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments that unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. These must be authorised by the head teacher. School will ask for proof of attendance.

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 Authority using sanctions, including issuing a Target Letter, monitoring and reviewing the Target for improvement for 20 days, issuing a penalty

notice and/or legal proceedings. Please ask at the school office for further guidance on the issuing of penalty notices for unauthorised absences.

Unauthorised Absences

This includes:

- Parents/carers 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
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays

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 parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with the family to understand the problem. We use our Family Learning Mentor to work with both the child and the parents.

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 education and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence and the reasons given thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and we will inform the parents/carers immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully we also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to careful monitoring.

Individual work is undertaken with the child and family and targets are set to ensure that attendance improves. Pastoral care is an essential part of this package.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you should follow the procedure detailed below.

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence before 9.05. (The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take the call.)
- Contact us on each subsequent day of absence.
- See a member of the Office Staff if you have to come to school to bring a sibling who is not ill.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the Headteacher and or the Family Support Worker .
- Refer the absence to the Attendance Officer and a Children and Families First Worker
- Visit you in your home
- Make a safeguarding referral

Attendance Officer

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful.

If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Attendance Officer from the Local Authority.

He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absence persists, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court.

Fixed penalty notices can be issued to parents or carers if the children in their care are absent from school for any of the following reasons:

- Holiday/leave of absence taken during term-time.
- Irregular attendance including persistent late arrival to school (after registration has closed) – 10 or more sessions within a current five week period.

A fine of £60 for each child is issued to each parent or carer. If the fine is not paid within 21 days, another £60 fine will be issued; both must be paid within 28 days of the date when the original fine was issued.

Decisions on whether to allow a leave of absence during term-time are made by individual schools, not the council.

Can I appeal my fixed penalty notice?

There is no right to appeal. Fines will only be withdrawn if they are found to have been issued in error. If you believe an absence has been classified incorrectly and wish to challenge the reasons given, you need to bring this to the attention of the school. As whether or not the council issues a fine depends on how schools classify an absence.

Types of penalty notices

There are two types of penalty notices – holiday/leave of absence during term-time and irregular attendance.

Holiday/leave of absence during term-time

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 came into force in September 2013 and amended the 2006 regulations removing the reference to 'holiday' and 'extended leave' as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amended regulations state the head teacher (or authorised person) may not grant any leave of absence during term-time unless there are 'exceptional circumstances' that apply to that application. The head teacher should consider each application on a case-by-case basis and on its own merits. It is at the head teacher's discretion if the exceptional circumstances warrant the authorisation of the leave and should also determine the number of days the pupil should be absent for. Head teachers should make clear to parents the date on which the pupil will be expected to return to school. All requests for leave of absence must be made in advance and by the parent/carer with whom the child normally resides.

A penalty notice will be issued when leave of absence has been taken but the school have not received and authorised a request in advance (where it can be clearly demonstrated that the parent/carer understood that permission had not be given).

Excessive delayed return from holiday: Where leave has been granted by the head teacher, an agreed return date should be discussed and what will occur if the pupil fails to return to school on the date stated. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 also enable schools to remove from their roll pupils who have failed to attend on the agreed return date. Following this date, reasonable enquiry should occur by the school and local authority to ascertain the pupil's whereabouts in an attempt to locate the pupil prior to removal.

Irregular attendance

When a pupil persistently arrives late, schools should investigate the reason for this and offer support where appropriate to rectify the situation. For any pupil arriving later than the close of registration, an unauthorised absence will be recorded.

Coventry City Council will issue a monitoring period, where at least 10 sessions (5 school days) are lost due to unauthorised absences in any current 5 week period. The local authority shall consider the issue of a penalty notice if further unauthorised absence occurs and the following is in place.

Monitoring a penalty notice

The local authority will monitor and evaluate the outcomes of penalty notices in terms of improvement in school attendance, payment and any subsequent legal action.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day.

Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

How we manage lateness:

School opens at 8.45am so that the children can come into the building and get settled by the time school starts at 8.55am.

Registers are marked at **8.55am**. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a 'Late' mark that shows them to be on site. The number of 'Late' marks is closely monitored by the local authority. If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Head teacher to resolve the problem and be offered support through Early Help. Parents could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

Holidays in Term Time

Term time holidays are not permitted. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 have been amended to state this and Headteachers must follow this policy. Leave for exceptional circumstances maybe considered on an individual basis at the sole discretion of the Headteacher. Should children be taken away for a holiday during term time the absence will be regarded as unauthorised and fines will be imposed.

Parents and Carers requesting holidays in term will be invited to a half termly Attendance Panel hosted by Head teacher, Chair of Governors and Family Support Worker to discuss their request and the impact it will have on their child's learning.

In all but exceptional circumstances, this will be declined.

The minimum target for attendance is 96% but our target is to achieve better than this at 97%, however, because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

People Responsible for this Policy and Implementation

The Head Teacher and the Governing Body.

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. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. Our Family learning Mentor, Office Manager and Administrative Assistants are the main people responsible for ensuring that parents and children are aware of and follow our attendance policy. They are assiduous in pursuing any poor attendees.

See also Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

COVID 19 Addendum

Attendance expectations

Attendance is mandatory. The usual rules on attendance continue to apply, including:

- parents' duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school where the child is a registered pupil
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, in line with local authorities' codes of conduct
- the duty on local authorities to put in place arrangements for identifying, and to follow up with, children missing education

Not attending in circumstances relating to COVID-19

The [schools COVID-19 operational guidance](#) sets out when pupils should self-isolate and when they ought to be tested in the 2021 to 2022 academic year.

Pupils who are required to self-isolate as they have symptoms or confirmed COVID-19

Pupils who have symptoms of COVID-19, or have had a positive lateral flow device (LFD) test, should self-isolate and get a confirmatory polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test. These pupils will be recorded as an X code in the registers.

If a pupil tests negative and if they feel well, they can stop self-isolating and return to school. If the pupil remains unwell following the test (such as with a different illness), then they should be recorded as code I (illness). Code X will only be used up until the time of the negative test result.

If a pupil tests positive, they should continue to self-isolate in line with public health guidance. Code X should be used for the period of self-isolation until the test.

Pupils who are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed COVID-19

Pupils who are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 do not need to self-isolate. They should instead get a PCR test, and should only self-isolate if they test positive. If they do test positive, they should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school.

Pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine

As usual, parents should plan their holidays within school breaks and avoid seeking permission to take their children out of school during term time. Families should also consider that their child may need to self-isolate following trips overseas that require a period of quarantine. If a pupil is required to be in quarantine on arrival in, or return to, the UK, the school should use code X in the register.

Pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable when shielding is advised

Clinically extremely vulnerable people are no longer advised to shield. All clinically extremely vulnerable pupils should attend their education setting unless they are one of the very small number of children and young people under paediatric or other specialist care who have been advised by their clinician or other specialist not to attend.

If shielding is advised nationally or in a local area again, by DHSC, PHE or UKHSA, then pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable may be advised not to attend school. Non-attendance in accordance with guidance from DHSC, PHE or UKHSA should be recorded as code X.

Pupils who are self-isolating but who have not had a PCR test

In line with public health advice, pupils with symptoms must self-isolate and schools should strongly encourage pupils to take a PCR test. Where the pupil is unable to take a PCR test, the school should record the pupil as code X in the register.

Schools should follow up with families if they are not satisfied with the reason as to why the pupil is not in school. Schools can request supporting evidence from the family. Where the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence, they may record this using one of the unauthorised absence codes, in line with the [school attendance: guidance for schools](#).

Remote education

If a pupil is not attending school because their attendance would be contrary to government guidance or legislation around COVID-19, we expect schools to offer them access to remote education. Schools will keep a record of, and monitor engagement with, this activity.