

## Attendance Policy



This policy reflects the vision and aims of Wallands Community Primary School by

- Encouraging staff, parents and children to maximise the learning experience in order that all children reach their full potential.
- Encouraging the development of high self-esteem
- Providing a framework for parents and carers and staff
- Providing clear procedures for involving parents relating to school attendance.
- Providing clear procedures for referring to external agencies.

We encourage all parents and carers to work in partnership with the school in order to improve attendance and punctuality and we recognise that “parents have the primary responsibility to ensure that pupils of compulsory school age attend school regularly” (DfEE 1999)

### **Principles**

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.

### **Definitions**

#### **Authorised absence**

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

**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 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 Support, Behaviour & Attendance Service from the Local Authority.

### **Lateness**

Lateness can cause children to miss key learning that happens immediately as children enter to start their day and so it is vital that your child is at school on time every day. If your child is going to be late for any reason please contact the school office by 8.50am to explain reasons for this. All lateness, before and after the close of registers, will be logged and you will be asked to meet with the Head Teacher and further action taken should this become a regular occurrence.

### **Absence due to medical appointments**

Whenever possible routine medical appointments should be made out of school hours. Where this is not feasible we ask that children come into school before and/or after the appointment. An exception will be made where the appointment involves long distance travel, this should be clarified in writing by the parent. Parents and carers must inform the office in writing of all medical appointments that a child has to attend during school hours.

### **Absence for holidays**

Parents and carers are requested to take holidays during the school breaks. We are unable to authorise holidays in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Any such requests must be made at least 2 weeks in advance on a Withdrawal from Learning Application: For Exceptional Circumstances form, which are available from the school office.

Penalty notices as a result of holidays being taken which are unauthorised can be issued, Wallands Community Primary School follows the East Sussex guidelines for 'Penalty Notices Guidance for Schools and Academies: for unauthorised absences'.

### **Repeated unauthorised absences/Persistent Absenteeism**

The school will contact the parent or guardian of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or guardians will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem. If the situation does not improve, the school will then contact the Educational Welfare Officer, who will visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents or guardians understand the seriousness of the situation.

Persistent Absenteeism is when a pupil's attendance falls to 90% or below irrespective of the reason for absence.

### **Rewards for good attendance**

All the children who have 100 per cent attendance in any one term will receive an excellence certificate for attendance; these will be sent home at the end of a term. There are special certificates for any child who has 100 per cent attendance for a whole year.

### **Attendance targets**

The school sets attendance targets each year. These are agreed by the senior staff and governors at the annual target-setting meeting. The targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. The school considers carefully the attendance figures for other similar schools when setting its own targets.

### **Monitoring and review**

It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance, and they will request an annual report from the Headteacher. The governing body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be. The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.

The rates of attendance will be reported through relevant governor's sub-committees and at the full governing body meeting each term.

The Headteacher will be responsible for monitoring attendance and attendance patterns.

This policy will be reviewed by the governing body every year, or earlier if considered necessary.

### **Responsibilities**

#### **The parents' and carers' role**

- To ensure that children are not on school premises unsupervised before 8.40 a.m.
- To ensure that children are supervised by an adult before and after school
- To ensure that children are at school ready for the start of the day at 8.50am
- To take children who are late to the school office via the main entrance
- To sign children in and notify the secretary if lunch is required
- To collect children punctually at 3.10 p.m. (infants) or 3.20 p.m. (juniors)
- To ensure the school has up to date contact numbers in case of emergency  
Absence due to illness
- To notify the school as early as possible on the first morning of any period of absence. If we have received no notification of absence by the time the registers are collected we will contact you or your nominated representative to ascertain the reason for your child's absence.
- To contact the school on the day their child returns after a period of absence so we know to expect their safe return, school may require a dated letter explaining the child's absence on their return to school.
- To liaise with the school regarding specific problems that might cause absence or lateness e.g. a sick child or parent.

### **The school's role:**

- To ensure that children are safe by shutting the school gates by 9.05 a.m.
- To register children promptly
- To record absence appropriately
- To check registers daily for first day absence
- To telephone parents and carers by who have not contacted the school by 9.30 a.m. on the first day of absence with particular attention being given to children who may be vulnerable e.g. Looked After Children.
- For parents and carers who cannot be contacted by phone alternative methods of contact will be pursued
- To log all phone calls and letters concerning absence.
- To monitor lateness and absence, look for patterns and take appropriate action.
- To write to parents and carers annually reminding them of their responsibilities and requesting up-to-date information regarding contact numbers
- To include regular reminders regarding absence and punctuality in the school's newsletter.
- To raise concerns regarding absence at consultation evenings or sooner if necessary.
- For the Head teacher not to authorise the request of holidays in term time.
- To report all unauthorised absence on the child's annual report.
- To publish attendance data in the school Prospectus
- To report to the Local Authority and the DfE all unauthorised absence.
- To monitor and set targets annually to improve attendance.

### **The Local Authority's role**

The LA states... "Responsibility for a child's attendance at school and for contacting the school promptly if a child cannot attend, lies with the parents. The Authority believes that schools that follow its guidance will have taken the appropriate steps to support parents in that responsibility." Page 4 of 4 Parents and carers 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 Education Welfare Service, acting on behalf of the LEA, is responsible for the enforcement of attendance of all registered pupils and has an obligation to ensure this, if necessary through legal action. It will:

- Act on requests made by the school re lack of contact on first day absence.
- Inspect registers twice a term and contact parents and carers of children who have a high level of lateness or absence. The Education Welfare Officer will contact the parent/carer of any child whose attendance falls below 90%.
- Try and resolve the situation by agreement with parents and carers where problems have arisen relating to attendance. If ways of trying to improve the child's attendance fail, these Officers can use court proceedings to prosecute parents and carers or to seek an Education Supervision Order for the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.
- Respond to a request for transport if a parent/carer has a severe or prolonged illness and has difficulty getting a child to school
- Provide support, if necessary from the Ethnic Minorities Pupil Service for parents and carers who have English as a second language.

## Summary

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

## Procedures

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

- If attendance drops below the school target of 96% (starting from Spring 2) parents will receive a letter indicating that this is the case and that attendance needs to improve.
- If attendance drops below 92% then parents will be asked to meet with the Headteacher to discuss the reason for this and any necessary action will be agreed.
- **If attendance drops below 90% then this will be classed as persistent absence from September 2015. Parents will be asked to meet with the Headteacher and regular monthly meetings will continue until attendance improves. East Sussex guidance will be followed when attendance drops below this figure which means that no illness will be recorded on the register unless a GP appointment card or other suitable evidence can be provided to support the absence. If attendance has not improved by the first monthly meeting then an Early Help Assessment will be discussed with parents. This will be initiated at the second monthly meeting if attendance has not improved and a referral to the Education Welfare Officer will be made.**

## Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

The Secretary will be responsible for checking first day absences.

The Bursar/Office Manager or her assistant will run weekly and termly reports and send letters where required.

The Lead Learning Mentor will be responsible for arranging individual action plans with identified children.

The Head teacher will meet with parents/carers as necessary and be kept informed of attendance issues, will intervene where necessary and take overall responsibility for improvement.

## 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.

Policy adopted Feb 2017, due to be reviewed Feb 2019

## Letter to authorise leave due to exceptional circumstances



(Parent/carer(s) name and address)

Date

Dear (Parent/carer(s) name)

(Child's name and date of birth)

Thank you for your letter dated (date) requesting permission for (pupil's name) to be absent from school from ..... to .....

You will be aware that the Department of Education made important changes to the law for families wanting to request leave of absence in term time. The changes made it clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Local Authority and school governors support this; therefore students will only be given permission to take leave in term time if there are exceptional circumstances.

Having looked at your application, I feel that your request can be supported in this instance. **Therefore, the absence to include the dates requested will be authorised.**

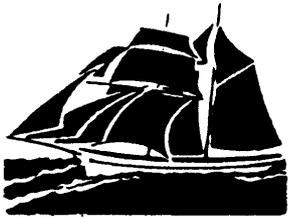
Our key priority is to ensure that your child(ren) are as successful as possible and are able to achieve (his/her) full potential. I would therefore ask that you support your child in catching up on the time they will miss in school.

Yours sincerely

(Name)

**Headteacher**

## Letter when leave is not authorised



Dear Parent/Carer

Thank you for your recent request for an absence in term time. I will not be authorising your request as I do not consider the reason provided for the requested absence to be exceptional circumstances.

I realise that you will be disappointed by my decision, but Government guidance means that, as a Head Teacher, I am no longer able to authorise any requests for children to be taken out of school unless there are exceptional circumstances. [ **OPTIONAL IF A HOLIDAY** “and family holidays do not fall into this category” ]

The consequence for your child taking an absence during this period is that it will be recorded as unauthorised and that we will request a Penalty Notice to be issued by the local authority to each parent / carer for each child.

Should you wish to present further evidence of exceptional circumstances, please write to myself **before** the absence is taken.

Please note that once a Penalty Notice has been issued there is no right of appeal.

Yours sincerely  
Head Teacher

**Letter to inform parents that attendance has dropped below 96%**



Date

Dear (Parent/carer(s) name)

(Child's name and date of birth)

I am writing to inform you that your child's attendance has dropped below the school target of 96% and is currently \_\_\_\_\_. I am sure you are aware how important it is that all children maintain a good attendance in order for them to achieve their full potential in all areas of their learning and therefore ask for your support to ensure their attendance improves.

What does your child's percentage attendance mean?

Below is guidance as to how absence impacts upon attendance each term and over the year.

Attendance Percentage	Day missed over an average school term (approximately)	Days missed over a school year (approximately)
100%	0	0
95%	3 ½	10
90%	6 ½	20
85%	10	30

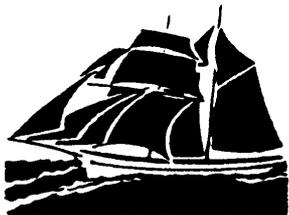
Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely

(Name)

**Headteacher**

**Letter to inform parents that attendance has dropped below 90%**



Date

Dear (Parent/carer(s) name)

(Child's name and date of birth)

I am writing to inform you that your child's attendance has dropped below the school target of 96% and is currently \_\_\_\_\_ which is of concern. I am sure that you are aware that attendance below 90% is now classed as persistent absence and may result in involvement from the Education Welfare Officer.

In order to ensure that we work together to improve your child's attendance I would like you to attend a meeting with me at \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_. At this meeting we will be able to look in detail at your child's attendance pattern and agree on a way forward to ensure that we see this figure improve.

If you are unable to attend the meeting stated above please contact the office to arrange a more suitable date and time. I am happy to accommodate work commitments and can meet outside of the school day if requested.

Yours sincerely

(Name)

**Headteacher**

Date