

School Policy for Attendance and Punctuality

Agreed and Adopted by the Governing Body of :-

Old Church CE Primary

Updated 1st June 2017

Introduction

The Governors and staff of Old Church CE Primary School are committed to protect the rights of all children to education as stipulated in article 27 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Our school Attendance and Punctuality Policy is designed to give clear information in respect of our Attendance Management processes to parents, children, school staff, governors and the wider community.

This policy sets out our ambition for our children and recognises that there is a strong correlation between any absence and underachievement. It also recognises that good punctuality is essential for a child to start the school day prepared for learning.

We have developed the policy with our children, parents, staff and Governors and it is in line with statutory guidance and expectations of Walsall Children's Services. The Policy provides information about rewards and sanctions.

We will focus on reducing persistent absence, unauthorised absence and we will challenge unsatisfactory reasons given for all absences.

Our school will be a welcoming learning environment and our teaching staff are dedicated to help the children achieve the best they can.

In order to achieve the best outcomes for children it is expected that all our children will attend school every day on time. We believe that excellent attendance is paramount to raising standards and is fundamental to whole school improvement.

We expect our Governors, staff, parents and children to adhere to the framework of this policy.

1.0 The Aims of this Policy

- Improve Overall Attendance
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for pupils, parents, staff and Governors
- To define agreed roles and responsibilities in carrying out specific tasks
- To provide support, advice and guidance to families
- To develop a systematic approach for reporting the school's absence information
- To develop a system of Reward & Sanction
- To promote multi-agency partnerships to address the needs of children with complexities related to irregular attendance
- To bring in line policies and procedures to reflect the diverse needs of the wider community

2.0 Drivers – Local and National

Raising standards for children and young people are driven by legislation, national policy and the local agenda. Education establishments are subject to expectation, regulation and inspection to ensure standards continue to rise. Schools are constantly challenged to maintain standards and

improve attainment. Our school will follow the principles and expectations as set out in the following documents.

- OFSTED Framework 2014
- Keeping Pupil Registers June 2008
- Reducing Holiday Absence October 2009 (Walsall Children's Services)
- Persistent Absence DfE letter July 2011
- Endorsement by C&YP Scrutiny Panel of their investigations into school absence
- The Education Act 1996
- The Children Act 2004
- Walsall Children and Young Person's Priorities

3.0 Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Governors

Governors will ask for a report each term outlining the following

- PA Report outlining the number of children on trajectory to become PA
- OA report with comparisons to the same period in the previous Academic Year.
- UA report with comparisons to the same period in the previous Academic Year.
- Number of Children who are chronically ill and level of support offered for these children

3.2 Parent Role

Parents must contact the school on the first day of any absence to explain the reason for the absence. Parents should understand that in law, it is the school who decides whether the absence is going to be authorised or not. Schools will base this judgement on the reason provided for the absence and/or the level of absence.

Parents are encouraged to ensure their child attends school regularly and any emerging issues should be advised to the school at the earliest opportunity.

Parents must write a note to the school offering a reason for any absence

Parents must make sure their child/ren arrive at school on time.

Parents wishing to take a holiday in Term Time must complete the request form prior to booking the holiday.

3.3 Head Teacher

The Head teacher will ensure the absence management process is in line with legislation and regulation and will also ensure registers are maintained accurately in accordance with The Education (Pupil Registration) England Regulations 2006.

The Head Teacher will continue to raise education standards for children by encouraging regular school attendance.

3.4 Class Teachers

Class teachers will ensure their registers are maintained in accordance with The Education (Pupil Registration) England regulations 2006. Class Teachers will ensure any information appertaining to a child's punctuality or attendance is communicated to the Attendance Clerk at the earliest opportunity. This will avoid unnecessary telephone contact with families or cause them undue concern.

Class Teachers will report any emerging patterns of absence to the Head Teacher.

3.5 Attendance Clerk

The Attendance Clerk will ensure registers are updated with the appropriate attendance and absence codes. She will also provide absence reports from the Education Management System (SIMS or Facility) at the request of the Head Teacher. The Attendance Clerk will liaise with Class Teachers and the Head Teacher or Attendance Lead to report any emerging patterns of absence or when a child is absent without a good reason.

3.6 Attendance Officer

The named Attendance Officer for the school works within a commissioned time framework and will support the school to manage their attendance. The Officer will normally visit once each week for a referral meeting with School Attendance Clerk or Attendance Lead. The Officers will carry out unannounced home visits to families who have recent absence. The Attendance Officers and the school will identify children who are Persistently Absent (PA) or at risk of becoming PA each term and will actively target those children for early intervention.

3.7 Education Welfare Officer

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will visit school regularly for referrals in respect of legal action for irregular school attendance. The EWO will be responsible for all prosecutions and Penalty Notices for irregular attendance.

4.0 Communication

We will communicate any changes or updated information to families and the community in the following ways. We welcome feedback from our families and Governors.

- News letter
- Website
- Annual reports
- Meetings
- Letters
- Telephone (to address individual matters when needed).

- **4.1 Home School Agreement**

Our school will invite parents to sign a Home School Agreement whereby they are informed of expectations for excellent attendance.

4.2 What our Children have said about absence

“ I miss my friends when I am not at school” – Year 4 Pupil

“ it’s hard to catch up when I have been away” – year 5 pupil

“ I like being at school” - year 1 pupil

“When I am late I don’t like going into class because everyone looks at me” – year 4 pupil

5.0 Our School Attendance Management Process

5.1 Daily

- All class registers will be marked accurately
- Reasons for absence will be screened to establish whether absence is authorised or not
- All daily absence will be scrutinised for reason and notification
- Parents will be contacted when the reason for absence is not satisfactory or unknown
- Parents will be advised if the absence is to be recorded as unauthorised
- Pupils arriving late will be recorded as such in the register

5.2 Weekly

Reception to Year 6

- All absences will be scrutinised for identification of repeat periods of absence or emerging patterns of absence
- Pupils having less than 96% Attendance will receive a Warning Letter issued by the Head Teacher.
- Parents will be invited to attend a meeting in school where no improvement has occurred within 2 weeks of receiving a letter from the Head Teacher.
- Referrals are made to the Education Welfare Service where attendance is below 93%.
- Education Welfare Service will commence formal action on behalf of the Local Authority where attendance is below 90% and the pupil is of compulsory school age.
- Requests for holiday absence referred to Head Teacher and Governors and parents informed of outcome by letter. Requests will only be considered for exceptional circumstances.

Nursery

- All absences will be scrutinised for identification of repeat periods of absence or emerging patterns of absence
- Pupils having less than 90% Attendance will receive a Warning Letter issued by the Head Teacher.
- Parents will be invited to attend a meeting in school where no improvement has occurred within 2 weeks of receiving a letter from the Head Teacher.
- Nursery pupils whose absence meets the criteria as directed by the Department for Education may be removed from the school roll.

5.3 Half Term

- Letters sent to children on trajectory to becoming Persistent Absentees.
- Identification of children who need multi-agency involvement to support concerns or complexities which include absence or punctuality concerns.

- Implementation of multi-agency involvement to support concerns or complexities of individual cases where there are absence or punctuality concerns.

5.4 End of Term - Autumn & Spring

- Report to head teacher and Lead Governor showing
 - No. of pupils on trajectory to becoming PA
 - Overall absence compared to same period in the previous Academic Year
 - Unauthorised absence compared to the same period in the previous Academic Year
 - No. of referrals to EWS
- Identification of pupils 'at risk' of PA and referral to the Attendance Officer
- With Attendance Officer, scrutinise pupils' attendance to identify those to progress to EWO
- Ensure pupils with chronic medical conditions are properly supported
- Refresh Attendance Action Plans with the Attendance Officers to identify pupils 'at risk' of becoming PA

5.5 End of Year – July

- End of year report to Head Teacher and Governors
 - 3 year trend for OA and PA
 - Comparisons for National and Local OA & PA (Autumn figures only)
 - Progress to targets
 - EWS involvement
 - Précis of intervention from other agencies
 - Impact of intervention
 - Holiday absence level and comparisons
 - Rewards and sanctions detailed

6.0 Types of Absence

6.1 Arriving at school late

The times of our school day are as follows

Early Years

Morning Nursery: 8.30 – 11.30

Afternoon Nursery: 12.15 – 15.15

Reception

Morning Session: 08.50 to 12.15

Afternoon Session: 13.10 to 15.10

Key Stage 1

Morning Session : 08.50 to 12.15

Afternoon Session 13.10 to 15.10

Key Stage 2

Morning Session : 08.50 to 12.30

Afternoon Session 13.20 to 15.10

Morning Registration closes at 09.00

Afternoon Registration closes at 13.20 (Reception and KS1) 13.30 (KS2)

If a child arrives at school after registration has opened at 0850 in the morning or 13.10 / 13.20 in the afternoon but before the register has closed, then he or she will be recorded as **LATE** using the L code. If they arrive after registration has closed then they will be recorded as **unauthorised absence** using the U registration code.

6.1 Unauthorised Absence (UA)

All absence will have an appropriate code in accordance with DfE Guidance Absence and Attendance Codes. If there has been no reason provided for the absence or an unsatisfactory reason has been provided then the school can only record absence as UNAUTHORISED. It is the decision of the school and NOT the parent which determines whether absence is authorised or not.

Examples of Unauthorised Absence could be:

- Family Birthday
- Holidays not agreed
- Shopping
- Hair cuts
- Buying shoes or uniform
- Emerging patterns of any absence until satisfactory reason has been sought
- Illness of another family member
- Illness & bereavement of grandparents and extended family members
- Trips to airports

6.2 Authorised Absence (AA)

Absence can be recorded as authorised when a school has been satisfied there is a satisfactory reason for the absence. It is only recorded as authorised if it is something affecting the child's ability to attend school.

6.2 Leave of Absence – Holidays

Leave of absence for holidays during term time is permitted only in exceptional circumstances only.

Parents need to apply for leave of absence **in writing to the Head Teacher in advance**, outlining the following:

- First date and last date of holiday absence
- Name, address and date of birth of the Child
- Full names and date of birth of parents
- Names of siblings at other Walsall Schools
- Reasons for such a request
- Details of proposed outward bound & incoming flight details

Parents will be informed in writing of the decision as to whether the leave of absence is authorised or not.

There is no automatic right for any absence. The Child's education will be paramount and absence will only be granted in very exceptional circumstances. The school and governing

body are committed to raising standards and therefore the educational needs of the child will be critical in the decision making process. Parents should not expect holiday absence to be granted.

The school follows the principles as set out in Walsall Children's Services - Guidance for 'Tackling Holiday Absence'.

6.3 Persistent Absence (PA)

Any absence either authorised or not will impact on Persistent Absence. The school will identify pupils who are 'at risk' of becoming PA each term and will report to the Head Teacher at the end of each term the names of our children who are at risk. The school will then track these children through the year to ensure the risk of them becoming PA at the end of half term 5 is reduced.

The school will report all cases of PA pupils to the Head Teacher and Governors. PA pupils or those at risk of becoming PA will be referred to the Attendance Officer (Local Authority) each term.

7.0 Rewards and Sanctions

7.1 Rewards

Our school will use appropriate rewards for pupils who have excellent / improved attendance including praise, certificates, special mention in newsletters, material rewards etc.

7.2 Sanctions

The following sanctions will be applied in respect of irregular attendance

- School Letter –Attendance is 90% to 96%
- School Letter Parent Meeting – no improvement within 2 weeks
- School Late Letter
- Parent Contract
- Referral to the Local Authority Attendance Officer
- Referral to the Education Welfare Service for Legal Intervention
- Prosecution for Irregular Attendance – Section 444, (1) Education Act 1996

On conviction of a section 444 (1) offence each parent of each child may be fined up to £2,500.

Prosecution for Irregular Attendance – Section 444, (1) (A) Education Act 1996

To secure a conviction for this offence, the prosecutor needs to show that the parent had knowledge of the child's absence.

On conviction, each parent can be fined up to £2,500 and or imprisoned for up to 3 months. If they fail to attend court a warrant for their arrest may be issued. A pre sentence report is required. The sentence can be suspended for up to 2 years.

Conditional Discharge

This is a means of disposal by way of a fixed term period up to 3 years. If the defendant is convicted within the period they could be re-sentenced for the offence.

Penalty Notices and Walsall Code of Practice

Subsection (1) of section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 adds two new sections (444A and 444B), after section 444 of the Education Act 1996. These new sections introduce Penalty Notices as an alternative to prosecution under section 444 and enable a parent to discharge potential liability for conviction and for that offence by paying a penalty.

Section 3 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 gives powers to Local Authorities, Head Teachers or other designated bodies to issue Penalty Notices where a parent is capable but unwilling to secure school attendance. These powers came into force on 27th February 2004.

Under existing legislation, under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, a parent commits an offence if a child fails to attend school regularly and the absence is not authorised by the school.

The Penalty is £60.00 if paid within 28 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 28 days but within 42 days. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 42 day period then the Local Authority must prosecute or withdraw the notice. Payment of the Penalty notice is made to and retained by the Local Authority. Prosecution will be in respect of statutory action under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

8.0 Quality Assurance

We will maintain a high standard for recording and reporting absence. We will support children and families to achieve positive outcomes by engaging with school staff and other supporting services and agencies. We will report to Governors about the following

- Number of pupils on trajectory to becoming PA
- Overall Absence
- Unauthorised Absence
- Progress to Absence Target
- Our attendance monitoring process through the School SEF
- Align our processes to the Ofsted Framework for managing school attendance
- Number of vulnerable children accessing other service or agency involvement