

Waterbeach Community Primary School



Attendance Policy

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IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance at school is vital. Without it the learning process becomes fragmented and unsatisfactory; put simply: absence means missed learning. It is also a legal requirement that pupils of compulsory school age receive full-time education and this, with the exception of those educated at home or elsewhere, means regular attendance at school. Irregular attendance leads to pupils missing important lessons and therefore not fulfilling their true potential; it also places children at risk and may result in their being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour. ***Therefore we take the issue of attendance very seriously and do all we can to obtain very high attendance from all our pupils.***

AIMS

Our attendance policy aims to:

- support pupils and their parent(s)* in the establishment of the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality;
- ensure that all pupils have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer in order to increase learning;
- enable pupils to progress smoothly, confidently and with continuity through the school;
- ensure parent(s) are aware of their legal responsibilities.

*Throughout the policy the term parent(s) can, if appropriate, refer to carer(s) of any pupils.

INTRODUCTION

For a child to reach their educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children.

School attendance is subject to various education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education. This policy will contain within it the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance targets.

We provide 190 days of school per year recorded as 380 sessions (morning and afternoon sessions), 175 days of the year are available for holidays non term time. We expect pupils to be in school during these sessions and to be well presented, comfortable and ready to learn. Every day we start school promptly at 8.50am and finish at 15.20pm. There is an hour long lunch break.

Pupils are expected to arrive in school between 8.45am and 8.50am. Children are able to enter the school from 8.45am onwards and should make their way directly to their classroom. Pupils should not arrive before that time as we are unable to provide adult supervision. Pupils who are not present in class when the teacher opens the register at 8.50am are late; however, if they arrive in class before the register closes at 9.10am they will be marked present using the late code, L. If pupils are late they should enter school via the office with a parent signing them in via the pupil sign in system.

Any child who leaves school during the lunch break for a lunch at home, following pre-arranged home permission - usually in the form of a letter - is expected to return to their playground by 13.00pm.

Registration of pupils is considered to be a very important time. Registration has several aspects: it is a time for pupils to mark the official start of their learning for the day, it helps pupils realise the importance of punctuality and it is a legal requirement. Additionally, registration of pupils is the best way to ensure their safety during the day.

For these reasons, we treat registration very seriously and expect pupils and their parents to do the same.

REGISTRATION

- Pupils are registered electronically at the start of the school morning (8.50am) and at the start of the school afternoon (13.10pm for Reception and Year 1 and 13.15pm for Years 2-6).
- The register will remain 'open' for 20 minutes from these times, during which, if a pupil arrives 'late' they will be marked as present for the session but by using the 'L' code.
- Any pupil who arrives after the register has 'closed', will be marked as absent for the session using the 'U' code and will lose the mark for the whole morning's session.

A copy of absence, attendance and administrative codes can be found in Appendix 1.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

The school holiday dates and end of Key Stage Assessment dates are published a year in advance and leave of absence **will not** be authorised during assessment periods. INSET days are published as soon as the school have agreed these, but may be subject to change.

In line with the Government's amendments to the 2006 regulations (Appendix 1), holidays during term time will NOT be authorised. The Headteacher and Governors have determined that:

- In **exceptional circumstances** permission may be granted for a period of leave of absence
- Where leave of absence in term time is due to exceptional circumstances, an application form must be requested from the school office and submitted for consideration by the Headteacher on behalf of the school governors, no less than 4 weeks prior to the requested date and prior to any booking or monies committed.
- If leave is taken without prior authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence, the Local Authority Education Welfare Team may be notified and a Penalty Notice may be issued.

IF A CHILD'S ATTENDANCE FALLS BELOW 96%

- The Headteacher will write to the parent(s) to inform them that their child(ren)'s attendance has fallen below 96%.
- If attendance does not improve the Headteacher will invite parent(s) to a meeting to discuss the situation and ways in which the school can support the family in getting the child(ren) to school every day.
- Attendance targets of 90%+ will be set to show improvement over a set monitoring period
- If the child(ren) continue to be absent (unauthorised) during the monitoring period and fail to reach 90%+ attendance, the Headteacher may refer the family to the Local Authority Education Welfare Team.
- After the set monitoring period, attendance will still be carefully monitored and referral could be made if required due to;
 - 8 unauthorised sessions over an 8 week period
 - 90% and below mostly unauthorised over a longer period
 - At least 3 consecutive school days unauthorised over a 4 week period due to term time leave.

SCHOOL MONITORING ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

After an initial letter (Letter A) acknowledging reduced attendance through illness if applicable, the school follows an attendance monitoring system for notifying parent(s) of poor attendance:

- Letter 1 is sent to notify parent(s) that a child(ren)'s attendance has dropped below acceptable levels. Parents will be reminded of their legal duty and of the schools expectations.
- Letter 2 is sent if there is no improvement in attendance. It notifies the parent(s) of ongoing concern and contains a request for them to meet with the Headteacher to discuss issues. Letter 2 also notifies parent(s) that the Head Teacher has the right to unauthorise any absence due to illness without the support of medical evidence. Parents will be reminded of potential action if attendance remains irregular.
- Letter 3 is sent setting out attendance targets over a set monitoring period. It reiterates the need for medical evidence for absence due to illness. It notifies parent(s) that Local Authority Education Welfare Team involvement may be requested and a penalty notice issued and/or prosecution considered if attendance does not improve.

Should punctuality become an issue the Headteacher will write to the parents to inform them. If lateness becomes significant the parent(s) will be requested to meet with the Headteacher to discuss solutions.

A copy of these letters can be found in Appendix 2.

The school may suggest completing an Early Help Assessment (E.H.A.) form, with the parent(s) of pupil(s) who require support due to wider family issues that are impacting in various ways including on attendance. This would dispense with the formal letter process, providing a supportive rather than punitive measure.

Completion of an E.H.A. would not happen without prior communication with the parent(s) of a child.

The Penalty Notice is a fixed sum, per parent ,per child, of £60 (if paid within 21 days), rising to £120 (if paid after 21 days but before 28 days have elapsed).

AUTHORISED ABSENCES

The Department for Education has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for authorised or justified absences:

- When a child is ill or receiving medical attention;
- Days of religious observance notified in advance;
- Absence due to family circumstances (e.g. bereavement, serious illness).

There are other absences, such as “Approved Sporting Activity” that can be authorised and there will be events affecting families, some unforeseen, which will necessitate absence from school and professional discretion will need to be used in these cases about whether the absence can be authorised.

We expect absences to be kept to a minimum: routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged **out of school hours wherever possible**.

The Headteacher will make decisions as to whether an absence is authorised or not. Notification of absence is essential and enables the Headteacher to make considered decisions when authorising absences. It is the Headteacher’s prerogative to request that the parent(s) certificate short-term illnesses and to request a doctor’s notification in the case of long-term illness.

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES

Unauthorised absences are those where:

- No letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parent(s)
- The reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence above.

Parent(s) are expected to contact school to inform of any possible authorised absence. If this does not happen, school will attempt to contact the parent(s). If there is no response it may be necessary to visit the home in order to ascertain the whereabouts of the child(ren).

The following activities are examples of what would be classified as **unauthorised**:

- Holiday
- Minding the house
- Caring for relatives
- Awaiting repair people
- Shopping
- A birthday or family celebration.

There are clearly some grey areas. The guidance makes it clear that only **truly exceptional** occasions should be classified as authorised.

We ask parent(s) to **notify the school well in advance** (preferably 4 weeks notice) of any proposed special occasion to ascertain whether the school would view the reason for absence as valid or not. Individual cases will need to be judged on their merits and fine judgements will have, on occasions, to be made.

The Governments guidelines make it plain that, in the final analysis, it is the **school** that judges whether an absence is authorised or not. **A note from home therefore does NOT automatically make an absence valid/justified/authorised.**

APPENDIX 1

ABSENCE AND ATTENDANCE CODES

The national codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations. They are also used for collecting statistics through the School Census System. The data helps schools, local authorities and the Government to gain a greater understanding of the level of, and the reasons for, absence.

Present at School

Pupils must not be marked present if they were not in school during registration. If a pupil were to leave the school premises after registration they would still be counted as present for statistical purposes.

Registration Code/\: Present in school / = am \ = pm

Present in school during registration.

Code L: Late arrival before the register has closed

Schools should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open; this should be for a reasonable length of time but not that registers are to be kept open for the whole session. A pupil arriving after the register has closed should be marked absent with code U, or with another absence code if that is more appropriate.

Present at an Approved Off-Site Educational Activity

An approved educational activity is where a pupil is taking part in supervised educational activity such as field trips, educational visits, work experience or alternative provision. Pupils can only be recorded as receiving off-site educational activity if the activity meets the requirements prescribed in regulation 6(4) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. The activity must be of an education nature approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school. The activity must take place during the session for which the mark is recorded.

Attendance codes for when pupils are present at approved off-site education activity are as follows:

Code B: Off-site educational activity

This code should be used when pupils are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school. Ultimately schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site. Therefore by using code B, schools are certifying that the education is supervised and measures have been taken to safeguard pupils. This code should not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a pupil is at home doing school work. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the provider of the alternative activity notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. The school should record the pupil's absence using the relevant absence code.

Code D: Dual Registered – at another educational establishment

This code is not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census. The law allows for dual registration of pupils at more than one school. This code is used to indicate that the pupil was not expected to attend the session in question because they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered. The main examples of dual registration are pupils who are attending a pupil referral unit, a hospital school or a special school on a temporary basis. It can also be used for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, but only when the pupil is known to be registered at another school during the session in question. Each school should only record the pupil's attendance and absence for those sessions that the pupil is scheduled to attend their school. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby all unexplained and unexpected absence is followed up in a timely manner.

Code J: At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment

This code should be used to record time spent in interviews with prospective employers or another educational establishment. Schools should be satisfied that the interview is linked to employment prospects, further education or transfer to another educational establishment.

Code P: Participating in a supervised sporting activity

This code should be used to record the sessions when a pupil is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.

Code V: Educational visit or trip

This code should be used for attendance at an organised trip or visit, including residential trips organised by the school, or attendance at a supervised trip of a strictly educational nature arranged by an organisation approved the school.

Code W: Work experience

Work experience is for pupils in the final two years of compulsory education. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the work experience placement provider notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. Any absence should be recorded using the relevant code.

Authorised Absence from School

'Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

Absence codes when pupils are not present in school are as follows:**Code C: Leave of absence authorised by the school**

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each request individually taking into account the circumstances, such as: the nature of the event for which leave is sought; the frequency of the request; whether the parent gave advance notice; and the pupil's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling.

Code E: Excluded but no alternative provision made

If no alternative provision is made for a pupil to continue their education whilst they are excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked absent in the attendance register using Code E. Alternative provision must be arranged for each excluded pupil from the sixth day of any fixed period or permanent exclusion. Where alternative provision is made they should be marked using the appropriate attendance code.

Code H: Holiday authorised by the school

Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless in exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion.

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointments)

Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the legitimacy of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc rather than doctors' notes.

Code M: Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. Schools should, however, encourage parents to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

Code R: Religious observance

Schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

Code S: Study leave

Schools must record study leave as authorised absence. Study leave should be used sparingly and only granted to Year 11 pupils during public examinations. Provision should still be made available for those pupils who want to continue to come into school to revise.

Code T: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. This code should be used when Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is now known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. It should not be used for any other types of absence by these groups. To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school. Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at school.

Unauthorised Absence from School

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

Absence codes are as follows:

Code G: Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher.

If a school does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided

Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for the pupil's absence has been established the register should be amended. This code should not be left on a pupil's attendance record indefinitely; if no reason for absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time it should be replaced with code O (absent from school without authorisation).

Code O: Absent from school without authorisation

If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.

Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed

Schools should actively discourage late arrival, be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent.

Administrative Codes

The following codes are not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census:

Code X: Not required to be in school

This code is used to record sessions that non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend.

Code Y: Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

This code can be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause; or
- The transport provided by the school or a local authority is not available and where the pupil's home is not within walking distance; or
- A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.

This code can also be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The pupil is in custody; detained for a period of less than four months. If the school has evidence from the place of custody that the pupil is attending educational activities then they can record those sessions as code B (present at approved educational activity).

This code is collected in the School Census for statistical purposes.

Code Z: Pupil on admission register

This code is available to enable schools to set up registers in advance of pupils joining the school to ease administration burdens. Schools must put pupils on the admission register from the first day that the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school.

CHANGING SCHOOLS

It is important that if families decide to send their child to a different school that they inform Waterbeach Community Primary School as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from the school roll until the following has been received/confirmed:

- The date the pupil will be leaving the school and starting the next
- The address of the new school
- A new home address if appropriate
- Attendance at the new school

The pupil's school records will then be sent to the new school. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the Local Education Welfare Team for investigation. This may well include seeking assistance from Health, Social Care and Police colleagues.

APPENDIX 2

LETTER A

DATE

ADDRESS

RE:

Dear

I understand that has had an authorised absence recently due to illness and that you called the school every day to keep us informed We would just like to let you know how this has affected attendance which is currently at %

This letter is purely to inform you of the statistics, and I hope you understand that school has a duty to do so.

Yours sincerely

J GREEN
Head Teacher

LETTER 1

DATE

ADDRESS

RE:

Dear

I am writing to advise you that _____ school attendance is causing concern as it has fallen to _____ and as a result we are becoming concerned that _____ is missing a significant part of learning. I have enclosed a copy of _____ attendance record which shows an analysis of attendance, punctuality and whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Regular attendance is extremely important as missing school can have an impact on learning, and as I am sure you are aware it is a legal requirement. Good attendance enables students to keep up with the work required.

I will continue to monitor _____ attendance and I look forward to seeing an improvement. If possible, and again if it is medical please ensure we have relevant doctor's notes and appointment details.

If there are any particular circumstances that the school may not be aware of which are having an influence on _____ attending school regularly, please do not hesitate to contact me. However, it does no harm in speaking with the teacher or attendance team, because together we can make a difference.

Yours sincerely

J GREEN
Head Teacher

Enc. Record of Attendance
School Attendance Leaflet

LETTER 2

DATE

ADDRESS

RE:

Dear

I am writing to inform you that attendance is still causing concern. We are very worried that continued poor attendance could affect progress and we need to meet with you.

Please could you attend a meeting with me to discuss this matter further on the date and time below. This meeting will give you the opportunity to explain the percentage of attendance and will help the school maintain an accurate picture.

Date:

Time:

Should attendance remain irregular, the Local Authority Education Welfare Team may be requested to take more formal action. This could result in a Penalty Notice and/or prosecution through the Magistrates court for failing to ensure regular school attendance of your child under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Please make sure that from now on you provide us with medical evidence for any future absences in order for them to be authorised.

We look forward to meeting you to discuss any concerns you may have so we can continue to support our children in making good progress and I hope that you will work with us to improve attendance. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me on the number above.

Yours sincerely

J GREEN

Head Teacher

LETTER 3

DATE

ADDRESS

RE:

Dear

I appreciate that you were able/I am sorry that you were unable to attend/rearrange the meeting scheduled for as requested in my letter dated

It was/has been noted that attendance is now at %.

Due to this the following targets need to be met;

- **attendance needs to show improvement to 90%+ over the next eight week monitoring period - to**
- **Medical evidence is to be supplied to explain absences due to illness.**

As a parent it is your legal responsibility, as stated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that your child attends the school at which they are registered, regularly and punctually.

With effect from September 2015 schools have been advised by the government's Department for Education (DfE) that the Persistent Absence (PA) threshold will be reduced to 10%. Until this date it has been 15%. This means that if a child/young person has an overall attendance of 90% or less over a given period, they will be classified as a persistent absentee pupil.

I am therefore writing to inform you that if attendance fails to improve over the monitoring period, or attendance seems unlikely to reach the desired percentage, the case may be referred to the Local Authority Education Welfare Team and could result in a penalty notice and/or prosecution.

Yours sincerely

J GREEN
Head Teacher

LETTER LATENESS

DATE

ADDRESS

RE:

Dear

I have noted during a recent attendance review that your child is beginning to show a pattern of lateness.

It is the duty of parents to ensure that children attend school regularly and punctually. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens any possible classroom disruption.

If you are experiencing any difficulties regarding your child's education, I would welcome the opportunity of meeting with you to discuss this.

Please note that if your child arrives after registers close this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. I must remind you that as parent(s) it is your legal responsibility, as stated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that your child attends the school at which he/she is registered, regularly and punctually. Failure to do so may result in a Penalty Notice being issued against you and/or legal proceedings being considered.

Yours sincerely

J GREEN
Head Teacher