

Whitehouse Primary School

Attendance Policy

Principles

Education is important. Missing school means missing out. Children should be at school, on time and ready to learn, every day that the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without authorisation from the school is an offence on the part of the parent that can result in legal action.

High levels of attendance are crucial for any areas of development and gives your child the best opportunity to achieve and progress to their maximum potential. It promotes not only their learning and educational abilities, but provides many life skills and long term positive work ethics. Children who have good levels of attendance are more likely to be able to progress socially, have enhanced self-esteem and confidence, develop time management skills, have a good understanding of expectations for future life and develop a respect for the importance of punctuality and attendance.

Importantly, the more time they are in school, the more time they have for learning. Even a child with 90% attendance equals ½ day missed every week and over a school year that would equate to one month out of school, missing 100 lessons.

School Day (Please be aware of changes due to COVID-19)

8.30am – School gates open

8.45am – School gates are closed and if your child arrives after 8.45am, they will be marked as late with their minutes late recorded.

9.15am – If your child arrives after this time, their absence will be marked as an unauthorised late.

Definitions

Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded by staff at the school as either **authorised or unauthorised**. Any information about the cause of each absence is always required, if possible in writing, evidence will be required to support some absences.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoon sessions away from school because of an unavoidable cause. In a case where a child has continued absence for illness, families will be asked for medical evidence in order for this to be authorised. Authorised absences can only be agreed by the Assistant Headteacher.

Unauthorised absences are those missed sessions that the Assistant Headteacher does not consider reasonable, or for which no 'leave' has been given. The Government makes it very clear that schools are not to authorise any term time absences unless for very exceptional circumstances.

Minutes Late is when your child arrives at school between 8.45am and 9.15am

Unauthorised Late is when your child arrives at school after 9.15am. This is recorded as an unauthorised absence.

*The National Association of Headteachers define the fundamental principles of exceptional as **rare, of significance, unavoidable and short.***

Absences that would be considered authorised

- Genuine illness
- Medical appointments (with evidence)
- Bereavement (Funeral)
- 1 day religious observance
- External exam
- Visiting a new school

Absences that would not be authorised

- Birthdays
- Family holidays
- Extended leave to visit relatives
- Oversleeping
- No Uniform
- Haircut
- Off school due to family illness
- Days off without an explanation
- Arriving after 9.15am

Please note, this list is not exhaustive. Cases will be looked at on an individual basis.

Parents and Carers' Responsibilities (Please be aware of changes due to COVID-19)

It is the legal obligation of any parent or carer to ensure their child attends school regularly. Regularly is defined as **on time, every day the school is open**. We request parents' and carers' full support of our attendance policy and we will happily work with any families who need support to improve their child's attendance.

Parents are required to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school time, wherever possible. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, staff should be informed in advance and given evidence for this appointment (for example, a medical letter). A 'present' mark can still be awarded if the child attends for as much of the session as they can. It is always better to attend for some of the time, rather than missing the whole session. During the school year there are times when it is crucial that pupils are in school for assessment purposes. May and June are particularly important months in preparing for and administering assessments for pupils.

For any requests for leave, parents are requested to complete a Leave of Absence form and, if required, to make an appointment to meet with an attendance officer at the school **PRIOR to the time of absence**. Leave of absences **can** only be authorised by the school.

Information about individual school targets, projects and special initiatives and strategies (Please be aware of changes due to COVID-19)

Whitehouse Primary School expects excellent attendance;

- The class with the highest attendance will be acknowledged in celebration assembly each week
- Each class with an attendance of 97% or more will get to play Whitehouse-opoly and get a team reward
- Punctuality and attendance is monitored fortnightly by the attendance officer and assistant head. Should a child's absence fall below 90% or they are persistently late, parents/carers will be contacted by the attendance officer in order to support families to improve this.

Attendance Report and procedures take by the school

Class teachers are given attendance reports at the end of every fortnight. Attendance figures are also reported on a child's school report.

If a child's attendance falls **below 97%**, the procedures are as follows:

Attendance Percentages **between 90% & 96%**

Parents are contacted by their child's class teacher and a conversation to discuss the decline in attendance will take place. Support will be offered to the family if required and appropriate. This will then be monitored for improvement. If there is limited or no improvement, parents/carers will be invited in for a meeting with the Attendance Officer and Assistant Head to discuss how we can best support you.

Attendance Percentages **below 90%**

If a child's attendance falls below 90%, parents will be invited to a meeting with the Attendance Officer and Assistant Head. The reasons for absence will be discussed in addition to actions to be taken. A parenting contract will be drawn up to support better attendance in the future.

If attendance continues to remain below 90%, after continued intervention and support, a referral will be made to the Senior Attendance Officer at the Local Authority to discuss Legal Interventions.

Parenting Contracts to improve attendance

A parenting contract may be written as a joint venture between home and school to ensure there is correct support in place so that children are in school, on time, every day. It will outline actions for home and school as, for attendance to improve, it must be a collaboration. These actions will then be reviewed for improvement after a set amount of time.

Persistent Absentees

The Government have revised their expected level of attendance from 15% to 10%. This means that children with an attendance below 90% (instead of 85%), will now be placed on the persistent absence register. The school has a responsibility to reduce the number of children attending school at this percentage and is required to have interventions to support families. These are called, 'persistent absentees' by the Government, whatever the reason for their absence. Special procedures may be applied to children at risk of falling into this category. The DfE collect information of Persistent Absentees through submission of our school census three times a year.

Fixed Penalty Warnings/Notice

Any unauthorised leave of absence of ten sessions (5 days), over any given 12-week period, will be subject to a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN). This fine is £60 per parent, per child. According to the local authority, any adult living in the family home, who has responsibility for the child, has the responsibility for getting them to school and therefore is eligible for a FPN. It is important to note, a FPN is issued by Milton Keynes Council and the school has no financial gain from these.

If the initial unauthorised leave is for less than 10 sessions, a warning letter will be sent to explain that the 12-week period has started. Any additional unauthorised leave in this 12 weeks, which totals to 10 sessions, will result in a Fixed Penalty Notice.

If the requested leave totals 10 sessions or more, a warning letter will be sent to parents, then upon return from the absence, a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued. In all cases we must receive as much supporting documentation for your reason of absence as possible.

Both of these instances are detailed on our Leave of Absence form, when leave is requested as we **actively discourage** time off during term time. If we are not given sufficient notice to issue a warning letter prior to the leave being taken, the Leave of Absence form will act as the warning to parents for a Fixed Penalty Notice.

In regard to the parent not having the right to appeal it says this on the back of the Notice and in our Code of Conduct for the issue of Notices.

Procedures if your child is absent

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

- Parent/carers are required to contact the school reception team on the day of the absence. We must have a reason for the absence before the registration period closes at 8.45 am. We have three reporting options: - Parents can leave a message on the absence line 01908 533288 option 1, leave a message on the Absence tab of the Parentmail App or email enquiries@whitehouseprimary.co.uk.
- The reason given will be recorded on the child's registration document.
- Parents/carers are required to contact the school EVERY day the child is absent.

If parents/carers do not contact the school and the school is unable to get hold of the parents, the school may conduct a home visit to check the child is safe. If we are concerned for the child's safety, a referral will be made to the MASH or the police may be called.

If the school are concerned about a 'Child Missing in Education' the safeguarding procedures stated within the Children Missing in Education Policy will be followed.

Illness (Please be aware of changes due to COVID-19)

There are times when your child may feel poorly. If your child has a slight temperature, cough or cold they should be encouraged to come to school. Staff will keep an eye on them and if their health deteriorates further then we will contact you. Sickness and Diarrhoea should be a rare occurrence and is not normally presented together. If your child is physically sick or has diarrhoea from viral infection, we would advise they must stay off school for 48 hours from the last bout. However, there is the odd occasion your child is sick for other reasons than a tummy bug. The school will consider the exclusion period needed on a case by case basis. If your child is poorly often, we might recommend a referral to the school nurse to help give you more support. In addition, there may be instances where medical evidence is required in order for the illness to be authorised.

Procedures if a child is absent due to persistent illness

If a child is persistently ill, the school is available to provide support for the child and the family. Parent/carers are required to contact the attendance officer to inform the school of medical appointments and if they are absent for long periods during serious illness. In this instance, the school will require written medical evidence, for example, letters or a doctor's visit. The school may request a GP Stamp to show attendance at a Doctor's surgery.

Family Holidays (Please be aware of changes due to COVID-19)

The government is concerned about levels of pupil absence from school and has therefore made changes to the regulations regarding authorisation of leave. Since September 2013, it is no longer possible to authorise family holidays. A holiday will be marked as unauthorised and will be recorded on the register. A fine warning letter will be issued and should the holiday be taken, each parent will be issued with a fixed penalty notice upon return. A Fixed Penalty Notice is £60 per child per parent, which becomes £120 if not paid within the 28 days. It is important to note that all holiday and fine warning letters are chronologically recorded to support the issue of a fixed penalty notice.

Punctuality

It is imperative that children learn the importance of punctuality in order to fulfil their own role in society as they grow into young adults. This role modelling of good practice begins in primary school.

- Children are expected to arrive at school between 8.30 am and 8.45 am to ensure the children are settled and ready to start their learning and receive their registration mark. Learning activities and some intervention groups occur during this time.
- A late mark is given to any child arriving after 8.45 am.
- 'Lates' are recorded in five minute intervals. If a child exceeds an accumulated 30 minutes late, parents will be contacted to discuss this and further support from the school is available. Intervention from school can sometimes be a welcomed helping hand for supporting the child with routines in the morning.
- If a child arrives after 9.15 am, they will be given an unauthorised mark. 10 of these unauthorised marks (in a 12-week period), will result in a Fixed Penalty Notice. You will receive a letter detailing if your child is at risk of receiving 10 unauthorised marks.

Responsibility for Attendance

As with safeguarding attendance at school is everybody's business. Parent/carers and all staff are ultimately responsible for attendance and punctuality matters.

Key Persons: Sarah Bennett – Executive Headteacher, Linda Kelly – Headteacher
Caroline Prudence – Designated Safeguarding Lead, Rachel Ndede – Assistant Headteacher, Nicola Bartlett – Attendance Officer, Sandy Seymour Griffiths – Attendance Administrator

Summary

The school has a legal duty to promote good attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly. School staff are committed to working closely with parents/carers in the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

We work within the law; Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, the Anti-Social Behaviour Act, 2003 and the Local Authority Code of Conduct.

Please see the Request for Leave of Absence information and Form for any request for leave during term time.

Co-Vid 19 Update on Attendance – September 2020

During Covid-19, there have been notable differences and expectations at both a government and school level which were outlined.

All guidance on attendance from 2nd July has been taken from the Government website: Section 2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>. This is the guidance Whitehouse Primary will be following, whilst working alongside the local authority.

Attendance Requirements

We now know that, from September, attendance is compulsory for all children and the local authority are encouraging all schools to follow their usual attendance procedures for children not attending. At Whitehouse, we expect you to notify us if your child will not be at school and this can be done via:

1. Phoning the school on 01908533288 and leaving a message on the attendance line (option 1).
2. Recording absence on ParentMail under the Absence tab.
3. Email enquiries@whitehouseprimary.co.uk

If a child is expected in school and does not attend, first day response processes will be followed, and subsequent actions taken in line with normal school attendance procedures. If we do not know where a child is being cared for, this becomes a safeguarding concern and will be followed up.

As per our policy, you will be contacted by your child's teacher if their attendance begins to fall.

Shielding

The period of shielding for vulnerable adults/children ends on 1st August 2020 so parents can send their children to school or if they are vulnerable children, they can return to school.

Holidays

We appreciate this summer has not been a typical one for holidays and the chance to get away however, now more than ever, it is essential for your child to be in school. We will be working hard to fill gaps in learning and to support children's well-being and, for their development, they need to be in school every day. Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind.

Government guidelines now state that schools should be issuing fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities.

Illness

Under normal circumstances, we would encourage families to give their children calpol and send them in; this is not the case. If your child is unwell, please keep them at home and refer to NHS and government guidance on next steps. We will not be providing children in school with calpol. Please follow reporting procedures above. If your child has sickness or diarrhoea, they must stay at home for 48 hours after the last bout.

No one with symptoms of COVID-19 should attend a setting for any reason and a test should be sought at the soonest available time.

If anyone in the household develops a fever, no sense of smell or a new continuous cough they are advised to follow the COVID-19: guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection guidance which states that the ill person should remain in isolation for 7 days and the rest of the household in isolation for 14 days. If the person showing symptoms tests negative, the self-isolation ends.

If a child has been advised to self-isolate through NHS Test and Trace, please let the school know. They must remain in isolation for the full 14-day isolation period. Even if they have a test which is negative, there is a chance they could still develop the coronavirus (COVID-19) within the remaining days.

Government guidance states: Parents, carers and settings do not need to take children's temperatures every morning. Routine testing of an individual's temperature is not a reliable method for identifying coronavirus. If we suspect a child has a high temperature (of 37.8° or greater), their temperature will be taken using a FeverSan Digital Thermometer. If their temperature is high, we will call parents to collect and follow guidelines below.

When a child is awaiting collection, they should be moved, if possible, to the medical room where they can be isolated until they can be collected. The sign should be placed outside the medical room on the notice board to show there is someone in isolation. The medical room door should remain open for ventilation and the fire door kept open.

If 2 or more children or staff test positive for Covid-19 within a 2-week period then this is classed as an "outbreak" and will be reported immediately to the Local Health Protection Team (HPT) which, in this area is, East of England. The HPT may send a mobile testing unit into the school and have powers to close the school if necessary.