

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

8.30am – School gates open

8.40am – School gates are closed and if your child arrives after 8.40am, 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 Deputy Headteacher.

Unauthorised absences are those missed sessions that the Deputy 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 8.40am 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.***

Things that would be considered authorised

- Genuine illness
- Medical appointments (with evidence)
- Bereavement (Funeral)
- Days of 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

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**.

Information about individual school targets, projects and special initiatives and strategies

Whitehouse Primary School expects excellent attendance;

- The class with the highest attendance will be acknowledged in celebration assembly each week
- Punctuality and attendance is monitored fortnightly by the attendance officer and pastoral lead and, should a child's absence fall below 96% 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 96%**, the procedures are as follows:

Attendance Percentages **below 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 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 Deputy Head. The reasons for absence will be discussed in addition to actions and 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.

Fixed Penalty Warnings/Notice

Any unauthorised leave of absence of ten consecutive sessions (5 days), 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 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.

This is detailed on our Leave of Absence form as we **actively discourage** time off during term time. If we are not given sufficient notice to issue the 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.

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, informing them of the reason for absence and before the registration period at 8.40am. Parents can leave a message on the absence line 01908 533288, and option 1, leave a message on the Parentmail App or email enquiries@whitehouseprimary.co.uk.
- Each reason will be recorded on the child's registration document.
- The 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

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

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 8.40am 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 8.40am.

- ‘Lates’ are recorded in by the number of minutes late. 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 warning letter being sent to you. We will then monitor attendance for the next 12 weeks.

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: Linda Kelly – Headteacher, Rachel Ndede and Steve Milne – Deputy Headteachers Jackie Puddephatt– Designated Safeguarding Lead, Jodie Price-Freeman – Attendance Officer

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.