

WEST BRETTON J&I SCHOOL
SCHOOL ATTENDANCE MATTERS
ATTENDANCE POLICY

AIM

West Bretton Junior & Infant school will provide a welcoming and caring environment whereby all pupils want to attend school. All staff will work with pupils and their families to ensure that each pupil attends school regularly and punctually.

There is a direct correlation between Attendance and Attainment. The aim of the Attendance Policy is to raise levels of attendance and punctuality for children, therefore maximising their opportunities for improved attainment.

OBJECTIVES

- Raise awareness of the importance of school attendance and reduce absence and lateness.
- Include all school staff, parents, pupils and Governors in School Attendance Matters strategies.
- Work effectively with parents/carers and partner agencies, using a range of strategies to ENSURE the attendance of individual pupils and the whole school is at a high level.

THE LAW

Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act states that if a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly, the parent is guilty of an offence. Parents, therefore have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's school attendance. Failure can lead to legal action being taken by the LA in the Magistrates Court, or the need to issue Fixed Penalty Notices. Since March 2001 there has been a further offence, Section 444 (1A) where a parent **knowingly** allows their child to be absent from school. This offence can carry a custodial sentence.

Wakefield Code of Conduct (September 2013) states that a Penalty Notice may be issued where there are at least 10 sessions (half days) recorded as unauthorised absence due to a holiday in term time.

“Payment of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, increasing to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice. If the Penalty Notice is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period the Local Authority must either prosecute under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 or withdraw the notice (see Code of Conduct for conditions when this may apply)”. Penalty Notices will be issued for each individual child and to each individual parent. If the Local Authority do not receive payment, they may then progress the matter to the Magistrates Court.

ATTENDANCE

Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day, and this shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent, every half-day absence from

school has to be classified by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. If you request any absence from school, it must be made in writing to the Headteacher, where possible not less than 4 weeks before the absence is due to start.

Only school can authorise the absence, not parents. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

Any absence from school is detrimental to a child's education and progress. It disrupts learning, routines and progress. Government research shows that **17 days lost learning in one school year can lead to a drop of one SATs level.**

If your child is ill, please notify school by 9.30am. School will follow up unexplained absences by contacting parents/carers on the first day of absence. Parents/carers may be invited into school to discuss attendance issues if there is a cause for concern. School will agree with the Education Welfare Service (EWS) at what point a referral to the Service will be made.

AUTHORISED ABSENCE

Some absences are unavoidable, usually due to illness, bereavement or difficult family circumstances. These absences should be supported by medical evidence where possible or a written explanation from the parent/carer. The decision as to whether an absence is authorised or not lies with the Head of the School

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

These are absences which are not permissible in Law, eg birthdays, shopping trips, days out and Term Time Holidays, and absences where no explanation has been received. The School will discuss unauthorised absence with the EWS and further action may be agreed.

The School does not authorise holidays taken in term time and works in partnership with the EWS regarding the issue of Fixed Penalty Fines.

Pupils have an entitlement to an education, not a term time holiday.

PERSISTENT ABSENT

A pupil becomes a persistent absentee if he/she has missed 15% or more of school for any reason and has an attendance of below 85%. The school will invite parents/carers in to discuss the situation, and referrals may be made to the EWS. A range of school and LA strategies can be deployed to improve attendance, including the Fast Track to Attendance programme, Parenting Contracts and Fixed Penalty Fines.

PUNCTUALITY

The Law states that children should arrive at school on time, every day. The school gate opens at 08:50 am and the expectation is that pupils should be there ready to learn in the classroom for 9am. Poor punctuality is unacceptable and leads to persistent lateness. Any child who arrives late, i.e. after the close of registration at

09:30am, will be marked as late and arriving after this will be classed as an unauthorised absence as registers will have closed. This leaves parents/carers at risk of legal action.

ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES

SCHOOL

- Set high expectations for pupil attendance, and monitor individual and whole school attendance on a weekly basis.
- Identify causes of concern with regard to pupil attendance.
- Make initial contact with parents where there is unexplained absence.
- Invite parents/carers into school to discuss where there is no improvement.
- Work in partnership with the LA, and with EWS particularly.
- Maintain registers effectively and deploy them robustly to facilitate presentation of reports.
- Provide attendance data for parents.
- Promote and celebrate attendance.

PARENTS/CARERS

- Ensure pupils arrive at school on time ready to start to learn at 9am and ensure that routines are in place at home to support this.
- Contact the school as soon as possible, before 9.30am, if absence is unavoidable, and follow this up with a written explanation.
- Obtain evidence where possible to support medical absence.
- Avoid term time holidays, and attempt to minimise school time appointments.

PUPILS

- Arrive at school, on time everyday with correct equipment and ready to learn.
- Comply with school regulations regarding attendance and punctuality.
- Discuss any concerns they may have with staff regarding attendance and punctuality.

Education Welfare Service (EWS) and Local Authority (LA)

- The EWS will work in partnership with the school to promote and facilitate improved attendance, at an individual level, either through a referral system or using the Fast Track to Attendance Programme; and at whole school level using proactive strategies and Action Plans.
- The EWS will work with children and families to ensure their school attendance and safeguarding is maintained.
- EWS will provide advice and guidance with regards to Children Missing Education, Child Employment and Licensing.
- EWS will work in partnership with other agencies and will offer advice and signposting for referrals to appropriate organisations.
- EWS will undertake legal action on behalf of the School.
- The LA will support the school with networking and training events and with individual School Audits and Action Plans.

This policy was reviewed and accepted by the Governing Body on 10 December 2013 and will be reviewed again in the Autumn Term 2014.