



WHITEFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

“Ensuring Regular School Attendance” – the guidance issued by the Department for Education in 2003 states “All Schools should have effective systems and procedures for encouraging regular school attendance and investigating the underlying causes of poor attendance which should be set out in an attendance policy. These systems should be reviewed regularly and modified where necessary to reflect the circumstances of the school”. The National Audit Office report “Improving school attendance in England” issued in February 2005 reaffirms that for effective practice, schools require a “clear policy on attendance that is communicated to all parties and implemented consistently”.

Vision Statement:

At Whitefield, we help our school community to be the best they can be, striving for academic excellence within our safe, happy and positive environment.

We enable self belief, care and respect for all; learning together to be proud of every achievement reached.

Introduction:

Whitefield is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Why Regular Attendance is so important:

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting Regular Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance;
- Give you details on attendance in our regular newsletter;
- Report to you termly on your child's attendance and punctuality rate ;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events.
- Carry out transition work with pupils moving between nursery and reception, and before leaving for high school;
- Run promotional events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for everyone associated with school, including parents, pupils, staff and governors.
- Set targets to improve individual pupil and whole-school attendance.

Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and leave in term time which have not been agreed
- leave that exceed the amount agreed by the Headteacher

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 15% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a Mentor, use of circle time, individual incentive programmes, parenting contracts, attendance panels and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Local Authority Attendance Team.

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- Or, you can call into school and report to the school office.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you by 10am;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Headteacher if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority Attendance Team if concern related to attendance cannot be resolved between home and school

Telephone numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents about things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

In-School Strategies to Improve Attendance/Punctuality:

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. School may consider using the following strategies to help support parents in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality. This includes:

- Meetings in school between parents, pupils, staff and the Headteacher;
- Parenting contracts;
- Inviting parents to attendance panels
- Use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and/ or referral to outside agencies (including the Local Authority Attendance Officer)
- Penalty notices

The Local Authority Attendance Officer:

If difficulties cannot be sorted out using in-school strategies, the school may refer the child to the Attendance Officer from the Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to

enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority.

Lateness:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can in turn, encourage absence. Being 10 minutes late every day throughout the academic year is the same as missing two weeks of school.

How we manage lateness:

- Doors open at 8.50am and we encourage ALL children to arrive at this time to ensure a prompt start to the school day.
- The school day starts at 9.00am and we expect your child to be in class at that time.
- Registers are marked by 9.00am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.
- At 9.30am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence.
- If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher and/or a member of the school team to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Leave of Absence

Following the September 2013 amendment to The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, head teachers no longer have the discretion to authorise leave in term time to allow pupils to go on holiday.

Leave of absence **SHALL NOT** be granted unless:

- a request for leave has been made in advance, by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides, **and**
- the headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the **EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES** relating to the request.

Additional Factors for Consideration

Pupils attend school for a maximum of 190 days each academic year. Regular attendance is vital for your child's educational progress. Whitefield Primary School and the Local Authority expects that all parents/carers ensure their children attend school whenever possible. Absence during school time is largely prohibited by regulation and hinders academic progress. Even in exceptional circumstances, the following factors will be taken into account when considering an application for leave:

- Will leave at this point in time be detrimental to the pupil's education?
- Will he/she miss any national tests or examinations?
- Is his/her attendance is already a cause for concern?
- Is the proposed absence during the month of September or any other transition period?
- Has he/she already had leave during term time this year?
- Did he/she have leave of absence during term time in the previous school year(s)?
- Does he/she have any absences which have been recorded as unauthorised this year?

If work commitments are stated as an exceptional reason for requesting leave, parents will be asked to provide employer details and a letter from their employer detailing any additional evidence which shows why leave cannot be taken during the school holidays.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice, which is £120 per child, per parent. Parents also risk losing their child's school place if they do not return from leave, as agreed, and readmission cannot be guaranteed.

Religious Absence:

The school will authorise one day 'leave' per religious festival, e.g. Eid, but no more than 3 days in any one academic year. Parents must request this leave in advance.

Roles and responsibilities for attendance matters in this school:

Parents:

- Ensure children attend regularly and punctually
- Contact school on 1st day of absence
- Avoid holidays in term time wherever possible and apply in advance using the form for exceptional circumstances only
- Attendance at meetings in school
- Participation in Parenting Contracts and Common Assessment Framework, and cooperate in support and interventions offered by school or other agencies

Pupils:

- Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school, e.g. early bedtime
- Attend school/registration punctually
- Speak to parents/teacher if issues arise that may have an effect on school attendance
- Cooperate and participate in interventions and support offered by school or other agencies

Headteacher / School Business Manager:

- Take the lead in ensuring attendance has a high profile within the school
- Ensure there are designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for attendance matters
- Ensure adequate, protected time is allocated to discharge these responsibilities
- Take overall responsibility for ensuring the school conforms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance

Designated Staff:

- First day response: Contact parents if a reason for absence has not been provided Business Support Officers
- Input and update the attendance registers Business Support Officers
- Regularly identify and monitor pupil, class and whole school attendance and punctuality levels, particularly that of vulnerable groups School Business Manager/Headteacher
- Regularly communicate pupil attendance and punctuality levels to parents School Business Manager/Headteacher
- Work with children and parents to remove barriers to regular and punctual attendance, following Absence Flowcharts 1 and 2 (see appendix), and using Parenting Contracts where appropriate (Headteacher)

All School Staff:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children and provide a safe learning environment
- Ensure an appropriate and responsive curriculum
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils' concerns
- To be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance
- To see pupils' attendance as the responsibility of all school staff
- Participate in training regarding school systems and procedures

Governors

- Adopt the whole-school policy and review regularly
- Monitor the consistent implementation of the attendance policy

School targets, projects and special initiatives:

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 95% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares, using the traffic light letter system. (**Green = above 95%, amber = 94% to 85%, red = below 85%**)

Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the county.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in the weekly newsletter and we ask for your full support.

Summary:

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils, as this is the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Date of Policy: June 2013

Date Review Due: June 2014

