

# West Exmoor Federation



## Attendance Policy

Reviewed in April 2019

## **West Exmoor Federation – Attendance Policy**

### **Philosophy**

The West Exmoor Federation is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience for all pupils. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from education, good attendance is crucial. As a federation of schools we do all that we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that prevent full attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

It is the policy of each school within the federation to celebrate achievement. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career. Our schools will actively promote and encourage 100 per cent attendance for all our pupils.

Within the West Exmoor Federation, we will give a high priority to conveying to parents/carers and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents/carers have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents/carers and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times.

### **Objectives**

- to encourage full attendance and punctuality
- to record and monitor attendance and absenteeism and apply appropriate strategies to minimise its occurrence
- to acknowledge and reward a successful record of attendance
- to ensure a consistent approach throughout the school/college

### **Statutory Duty of Schools**

The Education Act 1996 requires parents or guardians to ensure their children receive efficient, full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Schools are responsible for recording pupil attendance twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. An entry must be made in the attendance register for all pupils of compulsory school age who are on the school's admission roll.

### **Principles**

Parents/carers are legally responsible for ensuring that a child of compulsory school age attends school regularly.

We will work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued. We will send a clear message that if a pupil is absent, she/he will be missed. We will consult with all members of the school community and the Education Welfare Service in developing and maintaining the whole school attendance policy.

We will encourage parents/carers to be actively involved in promoting their child's attendance. We will ensure that all staff are aware of the requirements of the registration process and that they receive training on Registration Regulations and the Law relating to attendance.

Regular information will be sent to parents/carers and pupils informing them of attendance rates and related issues. We will promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence. We will ensure regular evaluation of the attendance policy and its associated procedures.

## **Procedures**

The following procedures are followed by all staff:

- the register is taken at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session by class teacher or designated teaching assistant. The coding outlined in the front of the register is used in all cases;
- an absence indicated by a red circle is left empty until authorised. Class teachers, teaching assistants or the administrator may authorise absences on receipt of a telephone call or letter. A record of telephone calls and letters is to be kept for the duration of the academic year;
- in the event of a child's absence not being notified to the school by 9.15am the class teacher, teaching assistant or administrator will ring the home number to request information. If a suitable reason for absence is not given the absence will remain unauthorised. If the school is unable to make contact with the family, a welfare visit to the child's house may be made;
- should a child be absent for more than two days with no explanation for absence being provided, this unauthorised absence will be reported to the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO);
- parents/carers of children whose odd days of unauthorised absence result in a child's attendance falling below 95% will be sent a letter of concern inviting them to discuss the matter with the Executive Headteacher;
- in the case of frequent lateness, the same policy for regular absences will apply in excess of ten 'lates' in an eight-week period. The register will be closed at 9.00am. Children who arrive after this time and who fail to give an adequate explanation will be marked down as having an unauthorised absence;
- we are not obliged to accept reasons for authorised absence if there is reason to doubt the validity of the explanation offered, eg, a parent/carer states that a child has been unwell and it is evident from discussion with the child that they have in fact been out for the day. Explanation such as minding the house, looking after the children, friends/family visiting, birthdays or shopping trips within school hours will not be acceptable reasons for absence;
- parents/carers of children whose attendance falls below 95% with patterns of non attendance that is not within expected norms for childhood illness, e.g. always ill on a Monday, will be sent a letter of concern inviting them to discuss the matter with the Executive Headteacher;
- parents/carers of children whose attendance falls below 90% because of regular odd days off with repeated upset stomachs or colds will be requested in writing to bring in appointment cards/ letters or copies of prescriptions as evidence that medical advice has been sort;
- copies of letters sent home regarding attendance below 90% will be sent to the EWO for their information;
- holiday absence is authorised only under exceptional circumstances (see appendix A) at the discretion of the Executive Headteacher and for one period during the academic year (up to a maximum of 10 days). It cannot be authorised retrospectively and must be requested by the completion of a S2 Absence request form (Exceptional circumstances only) (available from the school office) at least 10 working days before the planned leave. Holiday absence will not be authorised during the first two weeks of a new school year, or during the week prior to, or of, SATs. Authorisation will not be given for an additional period, even if less than 10 days were initially taken. Neither will occasional days or extended weekends be viewed as authorised holiday absence. Holiday absence will not be agreed if a child's absence is already below 96% (in the case of a request prior to November half-term, attendance data will be taken from the previous academic year);
- requests from parents/carers wishing to take their children out of school for extended periods of leave to visit their home country will be referred to the EWO;

- termly certificates and bronze/silver/gold wrist bands will be awarded to those children who have achieved 98% attendance (no more than one day of absence). A special Attendance Award will be given to any child who manages to achieve 100% attendance during a whole academic year;
- attendance targets will be set, in consultation with the EWO, on an annual basis. Progress towards these targets will be reviewed half-termly;
- regular review meetings will be held with the Education Welfare Officer to discuss the impact of our Attendance Policy and other issues related to attendance;
- the importance of regular and punctual attendance is high-lighted in our school prospectus and home/school agreement. Individual attendance will be reported to parents/carers on an annual basis as part of the Annual Summary Report.

### **Removal of Names from the Register**

The names of all children on the school roll should be included on the register. The names of pupils who have transferred to another school may be removed when the child has started at the new school. Where families have moved from the area, or if there is some doubt as to the whereabouts of a family, the matter should, after four weeks, be referred to the EWO who will make enquiries and advise if and when the name of the pupil can be removed. Families who take their children out of school for extended periods of time, eg, to accompany parents for work purposes outside of the UK, must be informed that the child will be removed from the school roll and will have to reapply for a place upon their return.

### **Appendix A - Exceptional Circumstances for Absence from School**

Before deciding whether to authorise leave of absence the Executive Headteacher will consider:

- the impact for the pupil's academic progress of any absence;
- the pupil's attendance over the academic year;
- whether the absence falls within any summative assessment periods.

Exception Circumstances Include:

- when a family needs to spend time together because of an immediate family member's bereavement, crisis or serious illness;
- funeral of immediate family member;
- wedding of an immediate family member;
- religious observance;
- children of service personnel about to go on deployment;
- children of service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays;
- one off sporting events/performing arts competitions, if the child is participating and is at county standard or above and a letter has been provided from the performing arts/sports regional governing body as evidence;
- graduation ceremony/passing out parade for an immediate family member;
- medical appointments (parents/carers should be encouraged to arrange non-urgent medical appointments outside of school hours when possible. If the medical appointment is during the school day, evidence must be provided. Schools should not authorise a whole day of absence for a medical appointment that occurs in the morning (the child would be expected to return to school in the afternoon, and vice versa);

proven parental employment restrictions that do not enable the family to take holiday during the normal school holiday periods.

Reviewed and updated April 2019