



## ATTENDANCE POLICY

[www.wattonatstone.herts.sch.uk](http://www.wattonatstone.herts.sch.uk)

Based on the Model Policy, issued September 2017

### **Introduction**

We believe that if children attend school regularly and punctually they will be best able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them as there is a clear link between attendance and achievement.

Hertfordshire County Council expects Children's Services, Integrated Services for Learning and all schools to work closely together in partnership with parents/carers in order to achieve excellent levels of school attendance and punctuality for all pupils.

### **Responsibilities: Parents and Carers**

Parents/carers are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Parents/carers fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at our school.

Parents/carers should also:

- ensure that their children attend and stay at school.
- ensure that their children arrive at school on time, appropriately dressed and ready to learn.
- instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly.
- ensure that they are aware of the school's attendance policy
- impress upon their children the need to observe the Home School Agreement.

- work in partnership with school to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance.
- inform school when a child is absent, before 9.30am to explain the reason for non-attendance. This can be done by telephone, absence answerphone message, email to [absence@wattonatstone.herts.sch.uk](mailto:absence@wattonatstone.herts.sch.uk) or verbally.
- avoid arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours.
- not book holidays during term time.
- inform school if a child is leaving to attend another school, giving the name and address of the new school, the child's start date
- Inform the school of a change of address.

### **Responsibilities: School**

School should:

- communicate with parents/carers about attendance and inform them that only the school may authorise absences.
- support the attendance of children and deal with issues that may lead to non-attendance.
- meet their legal responsibility to call attendance registers twice per day; these are taken at 8.55am and 1pm or 1.15pm (depending on the Key Stage). Attendance registers are legal documents that may be required as evidence in court cases.
- actively investigate any unexplained or unauthorised absences
- work actively to maximise attendance rates, for individual children and for the whole pupil body, identifying and prioritising early intervention.
- name a member of the Senior Leadership Team who has overall responsibility for attendance. This is currently the Head Teacher.
- record the reason for absence on SIMS (Information Management System)

- establish the reason for a child's absence as early as possible if it cannot be established at the beginning of a session. The absence should be recorded as unauthorised and corrected as soon as the reason for the absence has been established.
- support parents/carers in ensuring the regular and punctual attendance of pupils and promptly respond to any issue which may lead to non-attendance.
- consider whether requests for authorised absence should be classed as exceptional circumstances and communicate the decision to the parents/carers.
- keep governors informed and involve them in attendance levels.

### **Responsibilities: Integrated Services for Learning (ISL) Attendance Team**

The ISL Attendance Teams fulfil the statutory duty of the County Council in enforcing regular school attendance, enabling schools and parents/carers to meet their respective responsibilities.

Registers are made available for inspection during school hours by a Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO) when requested.

### **Fixed Penalty Notices**

- The school will send a formal warning to parents/carers regarding low attendance.
- If a child is absent for at least 15 half day sessions within the current and/or previous term (unless supported with medical evidence) the parents/carers are at risk of being issued with a fixed penalty notice.
- The LAAO will issue 'fixed penalty notices' to parents/carers where there has been a referral to their service from the school as part of the school's processes to address poor attendance patterns.
- Penalty notices may only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence.
- The amount payable is £60 (per parent/carer) for each child's absence if paid within 21 days or £120 (per parent/carer) for each child's absence if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice. Separate notices are issued to each parent/carer in respect of each child.

- If the Penalty Notice remains unpaid after 28 days the Local Authority will prosecute parents/carers for the original offence of failing to ensure your child's regular attendance at school.
- Issuing a penalty notice does not conflict with any other legal action being taken.
- A penalty notice will not be issued in respect of a pupil who is looked after by the Local Authority without the prior agreement of the Central Attendance and Employment Support team Manager on behalf of the County Lead for Attendance.

### **Punctuality**

When a pupil arrives late and the register is still open he/she should be marked as 'late' but counted as present for that session.

When a pupil arrives after the register has closed (9.00am) and the parent is unable to provide a satisfactory explanation, he/she should be marked as 'unauthorised absent' for that session.

When a pupil arrives late having missed registration, his/her presence on site should be noted in a book in the school office for purposes of emergency evacuation, etc.

### **If a child is absent**

- When a child is unexpectedly absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register and the office staff will monitor whether this has been supported by a telephone call or email from the parent.
- Parents must inform school if a child is absent before 9.30am to explain the reason for non-attendance. This can be done by telephone, absence answerphone message, email to [absence@wattonatstone.herts.sch.uk](mailto:absence@wattonatstone.herts.sch.uk) or verbally. The reason is recorded in SIMS, our Management Information System.
- If no explanation has been received, school will telephone the parent/carer to check on the whereabouts and safety of the pupil to explore the reason/find out the reasons.

- A note may be sent to the school prior to the day of absence. For example, if a child has a hospital appointment. However, parents/carers should avoid booking GP and dentist appointments during school hours.

### **Persistent absence**

School aged children are classed as 'persistent absentees' if they miss more than 10% of their possible sessions in a school year and are a concern.

What does 90% attendance mean?

- 90% attendance equates to ½ day missed every week over a school year!
- A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over time at their primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning!

### **Children Looked After (CLA) and Previously Looked After (PLA)**

School procedures to ensure that all Children Looked After (CLA) and Previously Looked After (PLA) have good attendance:

- communicate the significance of good attendance and punctuality with Foster Carers
- where attendance is a concern, a first day of absence procedure will be established with the foster carer, parent, guardian and social worker as appropriate
- when a child looked after is absent for three consecutive days or more, the social worker will be informed via email, text or phone call. The Virtual School will also be informed.
- ensure that the school's Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO) communicates with agencies who contact the school for CLA attendance data; for Hertfordshire CLA 'Welfare Call' obtain attendance data
- acknowledge 'attendance' in all education meetings, celebrating success and setting realistic targets if it is a concern

### **Authorising Absence**

Only the school can authorise an absence. The fact that a parent/carers has provided a note or other explanation (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept it

as a valid reason for absence. If, after further investigation doubt remains about the explanation offered - or when no explanation is forthcoming at all - the absence should be treated as unauthorised and the parent/carer informed.

Absence should be authorised if:

- leave of absence has been applied for in advance and has been authorised because of exceptional circumstances.
- the pupil is ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause.
- the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent/carer belongs.
- the pupil is the child of Traveller parents who are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending alternative provision.
- there is a close family bereavement.
- leave of absence is authorised to allow a pupil to take part in a performance within the meaning of s37 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 (c) for which a child performance licence has been issued

**Unauthorised absence**

Absence is unauthorised if:

- School has not given permission
- no explanation is forthcoming from the parents/carers
- if school is dissatisfied with the explanation

**Requests for leave of absence**

We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions however, we understand that there are exceptional circumstances where a parent/carer may legitimately request leave of absence for a child. We expect parents/carers to write to the Headteacher to request a planned absence. Occasionally this request will be granted.

Only the school can authorise an absence. **A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion and is not a parental right.**

The fact that a parent/carer has provided a note or other explanation (telephone call, email or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept it as a valid reason for absence. If, after further investigation doubt remains about the explanation offered – or when no explanation is forthcoming at all – the absence will be treated as unauthorised.

### **Family holiday during term time**

We strongly discourage parents/carers from booking holidays during term time.

If a child is absent from school because of a holiday which has not been agreed by the Headteacher, this will be classified as an unauthorised absence. A fixed penalty notice will be issued if the pupil's absence exceeds 15 half day sessions within the current and/or previous term.

Amendments to the 2006 Pupil Registration (England) Regulations which came into effect on 1st September 2013 make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is for the Headteacher to determine what constitutes exceptional circumstances.

### **Admission & Attendance Registers**

The rules governing the maintenance of registers, including removal from roll, are contained in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended 2010, 2011, 2013 and 2016.

It is important that the admission register is accurate and kept up to date.

Registers should be kept in a secure place for a period of not less than 3 years.

Computerised registration systems register print-outs should be made not less than once a month. A whole school year register print-out should be bound in a single volume and retained for a period of not less than 3 years.

### **Part-time time-tables**

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a part time timetable to meet an individual pupil's needs. A part time timetable must be time limited and must not be treated as a long term solution and can only be made with parental agreement. Further guidance on this is available.

## **Monitoring and review**

It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance. Attendance information is included in the Head's Report at Full Governing Body meetings and the Resources committee monitor attendance on a regular basis. The governor responsible for Pupil Premium monitors the attendance of this vulnerable group.

The school keeps accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.

Attendance information is shared with:

- parents/carers in the school newsletter regularly
- parents/carers on the school website
- school governors
- the Hertfordshire Improvement Partner (HIP)
- OFSTED inspectors

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