



Executive Headteacher: Mrs Cathy Draper

# Attendance Policy

## 2017

## Introduction

Under Section 36 of the Education Act 1944, parents of children of compulsory school age (between 5-16) must ensure their child receives a proper full-time education, either by attending school or by making other arrangements with the Local Education Authority. Most parents choose to send their child to school. Parents are therefore responsible for ensuring their child attends regularly and punctually. This policy aims to:

- promote the need for good attendance and encourage children to become reliable and responsible;
- ensure that parents are fully aware of their responsibilities relating to their child's attendance at school and why regular, punctual attendance is important;
- have effective procedures in place for recording and monitoring pupils' absences and the reasons for these;
- offer appropriate support to parents and pupils in order to improve poor attendance;
- deal with parents' requests for their child's absence fairly, on an individual basis, taking into consideration any extenuating circumstances.

## Why it is important for children to attend school regularly?

- A good education will give a child the best possible start in life;
- If they aren't at school, they aren't learning – they then don't know the same things as their friends
- When a child does not attend regularly he or she will have difficulty in keeping up with their work and will therefore not achieve their full potential;
- A child who does not attend school regularly may have difficulty in maintaining friendships;
- Employers will want to be sure that their employees are reliable, so children who have had poor attendance may have less chance of getting a good job;
- Young people who are off school for no good reason are at risk of becoming victims of crime or abuse and may also be drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour.

## How our schools will promote good attendance:

- The schools' attendance figures are published weekly in the newsletter;
- The schools will ensure, through the Schools' Prospectus and reminders in the school newsletter, that all parents are aware of the procedures they must use when their child is absent, that they must give reasons for their child's absence and that these reasons must be in line with those permitted by law, as interpreted in the school's attendance policy;
- The school web site will display this policy and provide other parental advice as appropriate.
- The schools have procedures in place to follow up and support poor attendance and frequent lateness and will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these on a termly basis through the Full Governing Body, including children under the age of 5.
- The schools have a reward system of certificates, extra privileges and prizes to promote good attendance and also improving attendance, so that everyone has a chance to be rewarded for their work ethic.

Over 99%	Outstanding
Over 97.5%	Good
Over 96.0%	National Average
Below 96%	Poor – below the national average
Below 90%	Very Poor – will result in contact from school and perhaps the Education Welfare Service – classed as Persistent Absentee

- The schools are aware that children need to feel safe, emotionally secure and motivated to learn if they are to enjoy coming to school, and have policies and procedures in place to promote this climate and environment.
- The schools always provide a lively and interesting curriculum, which will encourage children in the desire to learn.
- The schools will report to parents on their child's percentage of attendance half termly.

### As a parent, your responsibility is :

- To ensure your children attend school on time.
- To contact the school immediately whenever your child is unable to attend.
- To ensure that your child is absent from school for authorised reasons only. (see authorised absence below)
- Agree to abide by the terms of our attendance policy
- To make routine appointments for your child outside normal school hours whenever possible.

### Our schools will :

- Promote good attendance and punctuality
- Maintain a clear and accurate registration process
- Regularly, accurately and efficiently record attendance
- Deliver effective communication when attendance is causing concern
- Report your child's attendance rate to you six times a year
- Contact you on the first day of a child's absence if we don't hear from you first
- Call every day of absence if your child's attendance is below 90%
- Chase up unexplained absences
- Call a panel meeting half termly if your child's attendance is below 90%. This will be with our Attendance Officer, your child's class teacher and the Head of School, to explore issues and offer support
- Issue advisory letters if your child's attendance rate is decreasing and below 95% offering support
- Issue an advisory letter if your child is late to school on more than 10 occasions during a term
- Where attendance is below 90% and not improving, we will refer to the legal process for persistent absenteeism
- Inform you of what learning your child has missed where their attendance is below 90%

### Policy, practice and procedure :

The school morning bell rings at:

- 8.45am for voluntary Morning Session at Short Heath - children can come into school at this time. Registration is at 8.55am when gates close.
- 9.00am for Rosedale with children coming into school from 8.50am for voluntary morning session.
- Lessons start at 9.00am at Short Heath and 9.05 at Rosedale and any child arriving after this time to join their class is considered to be late.
- Session times are 8.45am and 12.45pm at Lane Head.

Registration:

- Registers are taken at the beginning of morning and afternoon sessions, including at Lane Head. We require staff to mark only the pupils who are absent. The registers are then returned to the school office. Marks are then transferred to the computer and attached to a pupil's individual record. We intend in future to get marks straight onto computers.
- Children arriving after the school gates have closed must access the building via the main entrance and report to the school office.

- When a child is unable to attend school, parents are asked to notify the school of the reasons on the first day of absence, preferably by phone, or failing that, by letter. The school will whenever possible contact parents who fail to notify in this way. You should make contact with school on each day of absence.

## What we can and can't authorise as absence :

### **Only the Head of School or Executive Headteacher can authorise absence. Parents cannot authorise absence.**

- Where reasons for absence are not received the schools will follow this up, either through the class teacher's/group leader's personal contact with a parent or carer where possible, or via a standard letter from the school office which has a tear-off return slip for parents to complete, or a phone call from school staff.
- Where this form has not been returned within a week the absence will be coded as unauthorized after we have called you to ask for it again.

#### **Authorised Absences include:**

- Illness (if absence, due to illness is unusually prolonged the Head of School or Executive Headteacher may decide not to authorise this absence without medical evidence)
- Unavoidable medical appointments only when supported by official documentation/appointment card.
- Recognised religious observance
- The day of a Family funeral
- Traumatic event
- The day of the wedding of a member of their immediate family eg parent or sibling

### **The Head of School or Executive Headteacher will not normally authorise a child's absence for:**

- Family Holidays
- Medical appointments without proof of appointment
- Shopping or day trips,
- Visiting relatives or meeting them at the airport,
- Where other members of the family are ill or have medical appointments, even where the parent is ill and unable to bring them to school,
- Birthdays,
- Waiting in for trades people,
- Unapproved sporting events.

However, the school recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances and so each request is considered carefully, taking into consideration the family situation and the child's previous attendance record. If the parent wishes to take their child out of school for any reason other than the child's medical appointment, or because the child is ill, they must first discuss the circumstances with the Head of School or Executive Headteacher, who will decide whether or not the school is able to authorise the absence. By law a child's rates of authorised and unauthorised absence must be reported on the annual school report which forms part of the child's official school record and must be passed on to any future school the child attends.

## Term time holiday :

The DfE does not allow us to authorise term time holidays, except for in exceptional circumstances which will always need to be discussed with the Head of School or Executive Headteacher. We can make allowances, but it's very rare, so please don't be offended if we say no.

Children who are absent for more than four school weeks will be removed from the Register until their return, and their place will not be reserved. If there is a waiting list for places in that year group, the school place will be allocated to the first child on the waiting list. Taking holidays in term time will usually be subject to a fixed penalty fine (currently £60 per parent per child) where children are over the age of 5.

## How we reward good attendance :

- Children with attendance learn more and achieve better than others with poor attendance
- Children receive certificates from school for 100% attendance at least once a year and usually termly
- Rewards are also available for most improved attendance half termly
- The class/group with the best termly attendance will receive a class/group reward
- The class/group receiving the highest attendance each week will receive special privileges as agreed by children
- Attendance information is available every week on our newsletter.

## How we monitor and challenge poor attendance :

When either a child's attendance drops below 90% or a child is late on more than 10 occasions in one term, their records may be referred to the Education Welfare Service if they are over 5 years of age. Initially this may involve a visit by an educational welfare officer to discuss the reasons for absence or lateness and to arrange a reintegration to school as soon as possible. Certainly, an attendance panel meeting will be held in school. Should absence remain a persistent cause of concern after these preliminary enquiries Walsall Children's Services will commence their five stages towards legal action. (see appendix) In addition Walsall Children's Services will conduct regular truancy sweeps of local streets and shopping areas. Any pupil of school age, whether or not an adult accompanies them, may be stopped in the street on these occasions and asked to explain their absence from school. School can and will contact families where they are concerned about poor attendance and will always try to work in partnership with the family in order to improve attendance. We use our team of Family Support Advisors to help you wherever we can in order to improve your child's attendance and will be in regular contact with you to make sure we are doing everything we can.

## Reviewing and revising this policy :

The governing body will review this policy annually. The leadership team will regularly review the effectiveness of reward strategies and revise them accordingly. Administrative staff will review the effectiveness of recording procedures at least annually. The Head of School or Executive Headteacher, staff and governors will review the attendance figures weekly and Head's of School are informed of individual children causing concern each week. Parents will receive a record of their child's attendance at least six times per year and more frequently if their child's attendance is cause for concern.

## The legal process for persistent absenteeism:

Schools will do everything we can to ensure your child has good attendance. Where this cannot be achieved, a legal process becomes necessary.

### **Stage 1**

The school explores reasons for absence and refers unauthorised and persistent absence to Education Welfare.

### **Stage 2**

An Attendance Officer makes contact with the family and submits a report back to school.

### **Stage 3**

The Attendance Officer may either:

- Refer social or other issues to another relevant agency
- Re-integrate the pupil back to school
- If there is no cooperation from the family they will send a warning letter, make further contact and if no improvement send a second and third warning letter. Check whether a child is subject to processes with

the Walsall Antisocial Behaviour Panel. If still no improvement refer the child to the Education Welfare Attendance Panel.

#### **Stage 4**

The External Attendance Panel considers the case. They may:

- Suspend if attendance has improved
- Issue an attendance target to be monitored by an Education Welfare officer for 6 weeks
- Issue a final warning
- If no improvement refer to the magistrate's court.

#### **Stage 5**

Case taken to court. The court may decide to impose:

- A fine
- A school Attendance order
- Parenting Order
- Custodial sentence for an aggravated offence. Alternatively they may consider adjournment, absolute discharge, conditional discharge, and deferred sentence or community service.