



LAWEFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Written/updated: May 2018

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Pyramid Attendance Policy

Introduction

This 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 Important

Learning: Across the whole school, from Reception class to Year 6, 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.

Safeguarding: Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:

- Attendance
- Behaviour Management
- Health and Safety
- Access to the Curriculum
- Anti-bullying

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis may be considered as a safeguarding matter.

Promoting Regular Attendance

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

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give you details on attendance in our School letters;
- Report to you at least termly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through weekly class competition, certificates and other means;
- Run promotional events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school and pyramid.

The Law relating to attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-

- to age, ability and aptitude and
- to any special educational needs he/ she may have

Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'

The Law relating to safeguarding

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

Understanding Types of Attendance

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED (I, C, M, B, V, P) or UNAUTHORISED (N, O, U, G). This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required; ideally this will be given verbally on the first day of your child's absence. This is required for every child from Reception class upwards.

Authorised absences are hours away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. If any child has a medical appointment this must be supported by an appointment card or letter and handed in to the office.

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Headteacher. This type of absence can lead to the school 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 holidays in term time
- leaving school early on a regular basis

This list is not exhaustive. Patterns of absence will be challenged.

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.

If you do not know if your child is well enough to be in school or you are in any doubt, send your child to school or phone for advice. If school needs to send your child home during the school day you will be contacted to collect them.

If your child is ill for more than 1 day, medical proof may be asked for by the school.

Persistent Absenteeism (P.A.)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% 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 be approaching the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that point will be referred to the Educational Welfare Officer and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to a Fast Track to Attendance procedure and are at risk of Fixed Penalty Notices and/or prosecution when improvements to attendance are not made. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Education Welfare Services (EWS) who monitor whole school data regularly.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact school as soon as possible on the first day of absence; please try to make contact before 9.00am

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Learning Mentor or Welfare Officer if absences persist;
- Ask a member of the Attendance Team to visit you at your home to speak with you if we feel concerned about the absence;
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer who may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice if attendance moves below 90% (PA).

Telephone Numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of 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.

You must contact school within a working day if contact details change.

School's Learning Mentor

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. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way then the School's Learning Mentor will become involved. The Learning Mentor 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, the Learning Mentor can ask the Local Authority EWO to 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.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the Local Authority themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting Wakefield Council on 03458506506.

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, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Persistent lateness will result in prosecution and penalty notices.

Children need to be in school for the whole school day. If children need to leave due to unavoidable medical appointments, a medical appointment card must be shown to the school office staff before signing your child out of school.

Anyone requesting to pick their child up early on a regular basis will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer who will invite parents to meet and discuss the issues.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at 8.55 a.m. and we expect your child to be at school, at that time.

Registers are marked by 9.05 a.m. and your child will receive a late mark (L) if they are not in by that time.

At 9.30 a.m. the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a (U) 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.

After 3 late marks (L) you will be issued with a "3 late letter". If no improvement is made a second warning letter be issued. If no improvements follow a referral to the Welfare Officer will be made who will invite you to a meeting to discuss your child's punctuality.

If your child accumulates 10 or more Late U/O codes in a term you will face the possibility of a Fixed Penalty Notice.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Welfare Officer to resolve the problem, but you can approach school at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Leave in Term Time

Taking leave in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not removing them from school.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to have time off in school time to go on holiday.

Parents/Carers must give 4 weeks' notice in writing if they are applying for leave in term time.

Exceptional Circumstances will be considered by the Headteacher. Each request will be considered on a case by case basis. If necessary the Headteacher will consult with the school's Governing Body.

National guidance indicates that exceptional circumstances are:

"For service personnel who are prevented from taking holidays outside the school holiday timetable, if the absence will have minimal disruption to the pupil's education or when a family needs to spend time together to support each other, during or after a crisis".

A response to your request for leave will be sent via post/delivered by hand within 10 working days.

10 sessions of unauthorised absence could lead to a Fixed Penalty Notice. These unauthorised absences (U, O, G, N) are cumulative and collective across the academic year.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed period, will be classed as unauthorised and will attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice. If school have reason to believe you have taken unauthorised leave a home visit will be made.

If you take unauthorised leave from school, you may be at risk of losing your child's place in school. Your child could be referred to the EWS as a child missing in education.

Please note that a Penalty Notice is issued to each parent for each child taken out of school. A Penalty Notice is a fine of £60 per parent, per child if paid within the first 21 days. This will increase to £120 if paid within the 28 day period. Thereafter, if the Penalty Notice remains unpaid this may result in legal action under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Religious observance

Schools treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong.

3 days a year can be authorised by the school for religious observance. Please contact the school if you require any further clarification.

Targets

The school has targets set by the Government 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 96% and we will keep you updated about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares at parent's evening.

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

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 our Parents' Newsletter and we ask for your full support.

Reporting to Parents

The school reports attendance in your child's school report in the following way.

EXCELLENT	<p>Your child's attendance is above 98%. They are 'WISED UP' on attendance. As well as being an excellent attender your child will almost certainly achieve the best grades for their ability and have real opportunities in further education or the world of work.</p>
GOOD	<p>Your child's attendance is 96-97% They are 'GETTING WISE' Your child is likely to achieve their grades that will give them real opportunities to continue their studies or in the world of work.</p>
SATISFACTORY	<p>Your child's attendance is 95% and is nearly in line with national expectations. Your child is likely to achieve their target grade but their outcomes will be improved further if their attendance improves.</p>
UNSATISFACTORY	<p>Your child's attendance is 92-94%. They are below the national government threshold of 96% <u>Your child will miss up to 18 days each school year and this will make it difficult for them to achieve their best.</u></p>
CONCERN	<p>Your child's attendance is between 90-91%. They 'NEED TO WISE UP!' Parents / Carers may face a fixed penalty fine as your child's attendance is below 90% and they are 'Persistent Absentees' <u>Your child is missing so much time from school that it will be difficult for them to keep in touch with lessons or work.</u></p>
SERIOUS CONCERN	<p>Your child's attendance is below 90% You need to 'WISE UP and TAKE ACTION NOW as you will face a fixed penalty fine or further legal prosecution if your child's attendance does not improve! <u>Your child is missing so much time from school that it will be almost impossible for them to keep in touch with lessons or work!</u></p>

Those people responsible for attendance matters in the school are:

- Miss J Beetham- Head Teacher
- Mrs S. Khan – Learning Mentor –School Office Based
- Ms K Dexter – Education Welfare Officer LA

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 the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

Please be aware that inappropriate behaviour towards members of staff and other professionals will not be tolerated. If you are abusive and/or violent towards members of school staff, on school premises, on the telephone or elsewhere, staff will take appropriate action. The police may be contacted, you could be banned from the school premises temporarily or permanently and you may be prosecuted.

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