

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY

Attendance and punctuality is the responsibility of all staff, parents, pupils and governors. For sustained improvement and to ensure that the children get the maximum benefit from their entitlement to education, attendance issues are shared, given high profile and are underpinned by the school ethos and mission statement. At West Didsbury CE we have adopted strategies to actively promote good attendance and punctuality.

Good attendance...

- Leads to good levels of achievement.
- Establishes positive patterns for future learning in life and work.
- Builds self-confidence.
- Allows your child to make good friendships and flourish socially.
- Promotes a happy positive attitude to school.
- Helps your child to feel part of the school community, to feel valued and develop his or her skills, interests and abilities to the full.

Remember: If you value your child's education, then so will your child.

SCHOOL START TIME: 8.55 AM

AIMS

- To achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues
- To raise awareness amongst parents/carers and pupils of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- To deal promptly with the causes of poor attendance and lateness
- To reward good attendance and punctuality
- To work in partnership with staff, parents/carers, governors and outside agencies so that all pupils realise their full potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Staff, parents and carers must make attendance a high priority and convey to pupils, by their behaviour and attitude, the importance of good attendance and punctuality.

Specific Responsibilities:

The Headteacher will:

- Have overall responsibility for attendance and punctuality
- Raise the profile of good attendance and punctuality
- Ensure an attendance reward system is in place
- Complete a termly report to Governors
- Monitor attendance patterns
- Send out letters to parents to inform them of any concerns
- Authorise Education Penalty Notices where necessary
- Monitor and review the Attendance Policy

The Class Teacher will:

- Complete accurate daily registers
- Encourage good attendance within the class
- Initially liaise with parents/carers where an individual pupil's attendance or punctuality is of concern

The School Administrator will:

- Contact parents/carers if a child is not present in school and no reason has been reported
- Collate attendance data for the Headteacher on a half-termly basis

Parents/Carers will:

- Provide up-to-date contact details (address, telephone numbers and email)
- Notify the school when their child is unable to attend, with a reason, on the first day of absence
- Telephone the school after the first day of absence to advise if the absence is to continue
- Try to book medical and dental appointments out of school hours and where possible provide a letter or appointment card relating to these appointments.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day
- Let the school know if their child is going to be late
- Not take their child(ren) on holiday during term time
- Provide medical evidence of illness when requested.

Procedures for Monitoring School Attendance:

Punctuality

- If a child arrives late, the parent/carer or child must go to the School Office to register.
- The child will receive a late mark in the register. Children arriving after 9.30 am will be marked as absent and that absence will be unauthorised, unless an appropriate explanation is given by the parent/carer.
- Medical appointments must be authorised with a letter from parents, appointment card from the GP, hospital or dentist, etc.

If lateness becomes regular, parents will be given a letter asking that the situation improves. If no improvement is apparent, parents will be asked to come into school to discuss the matter.

Attendance

- The registers are checked at approximately 9.20 am.

- If a child is absent the parent must contact the school by 9.30 am on the first day of absence and explain the reason for absence. Should we not have heard from you on the first day, then we will call you to find out why your child is not in school.
- When your child returns to school a letter must be received explaining your child's absence from school.

An authorised absence is when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. Examples of authorised absences are:

- Genuine illness
- Unavoidable medical appointments
- Recognised religious observance
- Bereavement

An unauthorised absence is when a child is away from school without the permission of the school. Examples of unauthorised absences are:

- Days off on birthdays
- Shopping
- Holidays
- Looking after brothers or sisters.

If absence becomes regular, parents will be given a letter asking that the situation improves. If no improvement is apparent, parents will be asked to come into school to discuss the matter. If the issue cannot be resolved by the school, the LEA Attendance Advisor will make a home visit.

Addressing Attendance concerns

West Didsbury CE Primary School will take part in LA and national schemes to promote good attendance and the school have adopted the following steps to support families with poor attendance.

Poor Attendance and Punctuality

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the Governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support will be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance or punctuality does not improve, then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Local Authority and send a warning letter about possible penalty notices or prosecution.

Persistent Absence

The School's internal monitoring of attendance will inform us of children who are persistent absentees. A letter will be sent home informing parents and asking them to come into school to discuss the matter. A support plan may be drawn up together with the parents/carers and school attendance lead. Should the matter not improve, then the school will do a home visit. If matters still do not improve, then the school will buy in specialist attendance support from the attendance service to help work with the family. A warning letter may be sent out about a possible penalty notice or prosecution. If necessary, then court action will be initiated.

Holidays during term time

After illness, the taking of holidays during term time is the single largest cause of absence from schools in England. At West Didsbury CE Primary School we believe that holidays in term time should be avoided where possible because of the impact on our pupils' education and we encourage parents always to take family holidays in the school holiday period.

Research has shown that there is a clear link between levels of attendance and levels of achievement and that the more time a pupil has off school, the lower their levels of achievement are likely to be. Taking holidays in term time has a disruptive effect upon pupils' learning and it is often difficult for pupils to catch up with work that has been missed. It may also suggest to some pupils that their education is not an important priority.

As a result of recent legislation, Headteachers are no longer able to authorise holidays during term time. Headteachers may grant leave of absence **ONLY** if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist. Requests for leave of absence must be made in writing to the Headteacher at least four weeks prior to the intended absence.

Possible reasons for authorising the request for leave of absence could be:

- Religious observance
- Unavoidable work commitments which involve all the family
- Compassionate grounds
- Mission work
- Traveller's child – as stated in Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Balanced against this is the huge demand for places at our school and the possibility of us holding a place open for a child who may not return to the school. For this reason, we are unable to sanction any request for extended leave which is greater than 40 consecutive school days.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may lead to a fixed penalty fine of up to £60 per parent, per child, rising to £120 being issued by the Local Authority.

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES ARE ALWAYS INVESTIGATED.

Legally, parents have the responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance at the school where they are registered as a pupil. Failure to do so may lead to prosecution in the Magistrates Court under Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996. We always try to work together to resolve attendance problems without court action, but sometimes it is necessary to prosecute parents.

Dear Parent

I am sorry to write to you under these circumstances, but unfortunately during our attendance monitoring, it has become apparent that your child has arrived late for school on a number of occasions this term. Please see attached attendance certificate.

I am sure you are aware that school opens at 8.50 am, registration is at 8.55 am and our first lesson begins at 9.00 am. Whilst we are always sympathetic to the occasional home or travel problem, by continually being late your child is missing out on valuable lesson time. This disrupts their learning and the learning of their classmates, whose lesson is disrupted by the late arrival.

As part of our desire to promote good attendance, we felt it necessary to inform you of this and ask for your support in promoting good attendance and punctuality. At West Didsbury we firmly believe that good attendance and punctuality:

- Leads to good levels of achievement.
- Establishes positive patterns for future learning in life and work.
- Builds self-confidence.
- Allows your child to make good friendships and flourish socially.
- Promotes a happy positive attitude to school.
- Helps your child to feel part of the school community, to feel valued and develop his or her skills, interests and abilities to the full.

Please try to ensure that your child is in school punctually for the start of the school day to prevent further disruption to their learning.

Thank you for your continued support. Should you have any concerns regarding this matter, please contact school and arrange a meeting to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely

Mr M Whitehead
Headteacher

Dear Parent

I am sorry to write to you under these circumstances, but unfortunately during our attendance monitoring it has become apparent that your child has an attendance rate of less than 90%. This level of attendance is identified as persistently absent by the Department for Education and is in a high risk group.

We have attached your child's current attendance record.

We firmly believe that high levels of attendance are important, as we make clear in our attendance policy.

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We are keen to help you support your child to improve this level of attendance and with this in mind, we are happy to have a joint meeting in school should you wish to make an appointment and discuss the matter.

Yours sincerely

Mr M Whitehead
Headteacher

Dear

Thank you for your request for leave of absence for * between * and *.

Regulations passed by the Government in 2013 abolished the right of headteachers to authorised up to 10 days of absence a year specifically for holidays.

Under current legislation, schools are now only allowed to authorise leave of absence for any reason if satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist which outweigh the harm caused to a pupil's education by missing school. Regular school attendance is vital for your child's progress. We expect all parents/carers to ensure that their child attends school wherever possible. Absences due to holidays taken in term-time can impact on your child's progress.

Having considered your application in line with our school policy, I am willing to give permission for the proposed leave of absence. [Name of child] will be expected to return to school on [date]. Please can you be aware that if your child does not return to school on that date, any further absence from school will be unauthorised. This could result in Education Penalty Notice fines of £60 (rising to £120) per parent per child being issued by the Local Authority.

Yours sincerely

Mr M Whitehead
Headteacher

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Having considered your application in line with our school policy, I am unable to give permission for the proposed leave of absence, which will therefore be marked as unauthorised.

Yours sincerely

Mr M Whitehead
Executive Headteacher