



# Whinfield Primary School

## Attendance Policy

We now participate in the RRSA which promotes the rights of the child as laid down by UNICEF Convention of Rights of the Child (CRC). As participants in this scheme we:

- Ensure that coverage of any relevant UNICEF Articles is undertaken.
- Listen to the views of the children in our school regarding equality, diversion and cohesion if required.

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UNCRC Article 28: All children have the right to an education.  
Policy and practice in Whinfield Primary School respects children's dignity.

**Policy agreed and accepted by:** *Governing Body*

**Date:** June 2018

## Attendance Policy

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## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

### **1. Statement of Intent**

Whinfield Primary School recognises the importance of full attendance and aims to ensure that all pupils achieve and maintain high standards of attendance and punctuality.

Regular attendance and punctuality is a prerequisite to a good education and therefore is a priority for the school. Whinfield Primary School is committed to providing a full and inclusive educational experience for all pupils.

We aim to develop pupils to their full potential; parents have a responsibility to aid the education process by ensuring that pupils attend school regularly, on time, and in a suitable condition to learn.

Irregular attendance is likely to place the child at an educational disadvantage. As a school, therefore, we aim to pursue the goal of regular pupil attendance. In this matter the partnership between school and home is important.

We expect our parents to support the values of the School and their child's education and to support our school's procedures.

### **2. School Attendance - The Statutory Framework**

Education Act 1944 - Establishes the duty of parents to ensure regular attendance of pupils.

As of 1.9.13 holidays in term time are not allowed. The school has issued guidance for parents for a request of Leave of Absence in exceptional circumstances.

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1997 (amended) provides the new registration categories of Approved Educational Activity. (Amended Regulation 3(2), (3), (5) of the Education Regulations 1995).

Education Act 1996 places a legal obligation on the Local Authority to provide education suitable to a child's age, aptitude and ability and to any special educational needs they may have and also Section 444 states that "The parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable by law".

Education Act 2002 (Section 53) enables an overall absence target to be set, covering authorised and unauthorised absence, supporting school improvement and raising community awareness of the issue (September 2003).

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 made provision for Penalty Notices (section 23(1)) to be issued in certain cases of unauthorised absence. The Penalty (fine) will require the parent of a child of compulsory school age, whose attendance has been unsatisfactory, to pay a fine.

### **3. Registration**

There is a legal requirement upon schools to keep an attendance register on which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon sessions, pupils are marked present or absent. The Education (Pupils Attendance Record) Regulations 1991 introduced a further requirement that attendance registers must show whether an absence of a pupil of compulsory school age is authorised or unauthorised.

Both staff and pupils see the taking of registers is an integral part of the school day, as was indeed intended in law. Particular attention is paid to accurate registration and to the preservation and security of registers.

Darlington Borough Council requires all teachers to use the symbols shown in Appendix 1 for the electronic marking of registers.

In accordance with current legislation, each class in school has an attendance register. It is school policy that registers are completed by **9:05** a.m. in the morning and **1:05** p.m. in the afternoon.

It is our policy to record a late mark for children who arrive at school after class registration has taken place.

We believe that pupils arriving late seriously disrupt their work and that of others. Our policy is to encourage punctuality. 10 minutes will be allocated for registration purposes at the beginning of each session. Children will be recorded as being late once registration has taken place.

Our registration procedure is included as Appendix 1. Our procedure for improving punctuality is included as Appendix 2.

### **4. Absence**

It is the parent's responsibility to inform school of the reason for a child's absence. We would like to receive notification as soon as the child is absent from school. If parents do not contact school on the first day of their child's absence by 9.30a.m, the parents will be contacted to ascertain reasons for the absence and offer advice and support where appropriate. It is important that contact with parents early in the absence is established to ensure that parents are aware that the school is concerned about their lack of attendance.

It is a fact that parentally-condoned unjustified absence is a serious problem in some schools. This can be every bit as damaging as the more traditional forms of truancy.

Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents. The fact that a parent has offered a note or other notification (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept it if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence. If, after further investigation doubt remains about the explanation offered - or where no explanation is

forthcoming at all the absence will be treated as unauthorised. Where parentally condoned unjustified absence appears to be a problem in relation to a particular pupil, the LA will be contacted to intervene at an early opportunity.

An excessive amount of unauthorised absence can also seriously disrupt continuity of learning and encourage disaffection. We must be alert to emerging patterns of authorised absence. We may authorise absence retrospectively where we are satisfied as to the explanation offered. Absences of pupils of compulsory school age without valid reason or for which no explanation has been provided will be treated as unauthorised.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 provides that no offence is committed where a pupil of compulsory school age is prevented from attending school by reason of illness. If we are satisfied that a pupil is absent as a result of illness the absence will be treated as authorised. If a pupil has a long-term absence due to illness or a medical condition, Whinfield Primary School will make a referral to home or hospital tuition.

Where we have reason to doubt the validity of an explanation offered in respect of a particular absence, further information will be requested by the SENCO from the child's parents. If the school continues to be dissatisfied then the absence will be treated as unauthorised.

Where there is doubt about the authenticity attributed to illness, the School or the Family Support Worker can refer the matter to a doctor working in the School Health Service to arrange a special medical, or to make contact with the pupil's GP.

Leave for medical or dental appointments will be given (i.e. the absence will be authorised) where confirmation has been received from the parent (either in person, in writing or by a telephone call) by production of an appointment card. To minimise absence from school, parents are requested to return children to school after medical and dental appointments if they are well enough to be at school (i.e., following dental check-ups or routine appointments). We encourage parents to make routine appointments either after school or during the school holidays to minimise disruption to education.

School staff will monitor absence through the use of SIMS Attendance Manager. Teachers are not asked to do analysis of attendance but are asked to make use of the outcomes of analysis which may have relevance to pupil achievement.

The Education Act 2002 enables us to set an overall absence target, covering authorised and unauthorised absence.

## **5. Reporting of Absence Procedure**

Parents/carers are expected to telephone school on the first day of their child's absence. This will allow Mrs Hosey to interpret the category of absence. If information is not received, the school will contact the parent/carer to discover the cause of the absence. If

the family does not answer the telephone arrangements will be made for the SENCO to visit to establish a reason for absence.

The school office staff will keep all notes and records of telephone messages and a record of any verbal explanations, dated, in SIMS. As all registers are electronic the office staff will check all registers as they are sent to the office before contacting parents of those children who are absent.

If no response follows, the matter will be taken up by Mrs Murray, SENCO.

Parents should write a letter to the Head teacher, if they intend to remove their child from school for any purpose. It should be completed and returned to the school office before the absence.

Requests for holidays will be declined unless parents can demonstrate extreme circumstances. An application for Leave of Absence must then be made to the Headteacher in writing and parents will receive a written response.

A penalty notice can be issued to parents for taking their child out of school for the purpose of a holiday, if the absence is not authorised by the Head Teacher. The penalty notice would be issued by Darlington Borough Council following consultation with the LA.

**Parents do not have a legal right to take children out of school on holiday. Guidance on exceptional circumstances is issued to parents and published on the website.**

Where a pupil is present for registration but then has to attend an appointment, school need take no action beyond recording the fact that (for the purpose of emergency evacuation) the pupil, although registered, is not physically present. Similarly the school must note the presence of a pupil (again for purposes of emergency evacuation) who was not there when the register was being taken but returns later from an appointment. The school will check the signing in and out books and make a note in the relevant day's column in the register as to the times the child came or left so that there is information on the child's whereabouts in the event of emergency evacuation.

## **6. Categorising Absence**

Our policy deals in general with the categories of absence and cannot cover every eventuality. It will be necessary on occasion to exercise reasonable discretion when investigating some absences. However the following key points must be remembered:

- Registered pupils of compulsory school age are required by law to be in school
- Whilst it is right that schools should recognise that individual pupils and families have problems the aim should always be to expect regular attendance
- Lateness is actively discouraged
- Where a pupil is absent without prior authorisation an explanation is required. If one is not forthcoming (for whatever reason) or cannot be sought by the school, the absence must be treated as unauthorised and the register completed accordingly
- We are not obliged to accept parental notes where there is reason to doubt the validity of the explanation offered

- Explanations such as birthdays or shopping trips within school hours will not be acceptable reasons for absence
- Even where absence is authorised, we should be alerted to emerging patterns of absence, which may seriously disrupt continuity of learning
- In promoting regular attendance, we will work in partnership with appropriate Local Authority and external agency personnel.

## **7. Lateness**

It is our policy to actively discourage late arrival. In recognition of local circumstances (such as bad weather or occasional public transport difficulties), we may keep registers open for a reasonable period.

For registration to mean anything at all, a firm line will be taken on late arrivals. To do otherwise undermines the whole purpose of registration and may serve to encourage other pupils to arrive late. Particular attention will be paid to emerging patterns of late arrival.

Anyone arriving late must report to the School Office, and the child's name and class will be entered in the late book by the accompanying parent. The School Office will transfer the information from the late book onto the SIMS register.

In responding to lateness, we will of course need to take account of the individual circumstances of each case. In some instances enquiries may reveal that the late arrival stems from difficulties at home or other genuinely unavoidable circumstances. The school will seek an early meeting with parents of those pupils who persistently fail to arrive on time with valid reason and look at ways to improve attendance and punctuality in future. If the parents do not have any valid reason for the child's persistent lateness the school will monitor the situation. If no improvement is noted as a result of the monitoring plan, the SENCO will be notified.

## **8. Role of SENCO/LA Officer:**

The role of the designated Officer is to:

- Liaise, where appropriate, between home and the school (following school intervention)
- Investigate irregular attendance or lateness which may give rise to concerns that a child may be at risk
- Complete a regular register check; giving feedback and advice on improving attendance
- Ensure the school is keeping accurate and appropriate records for attendances and its systems and practices are robust
- Enforce the Local Authority Statutory Duties to secure school attendance where applicable
- Advise and or assist school in setting attendance targets.
- Liaise with other agencies to support the child and/ or the family.

## **9. Referral to the LA Officer, Brian Dean:**

Referral will be made in the following circumstances:

- Absence is regular and/or repeated and therefore affecting the child's education
- Lateness is a regular and recurring pattern
- Where staff are concerned about a child's attendance pattern or moving schools pattern.
- When a pupil has been absent for two consecutive weeks and the absence is unauthorised the child can be referred to the LA as 'missing'
- The intervention by school has failed to secure a pupil's regular attendance.

Referrals can only be made through the designated members of staff. Information regarding school interventions will also be shared with the LA Officer as evidence.

Progress reports on referrals will be given to the school at regular intervals by the LA Officer.

When making a referral to the LA , it is important that the following information is included:

- Parents/pupils attitudes towards school
- Parental reasons for non-attendance
- Action taken by school to resolve any identified problems
- Information regarding any special educational needs the pupil may have academic attainments and support being provided by the school
- Information regarding potential aggression from the parents.

#### **10. Role of the school in Monitoring/Improving Attendance**

- To promote and safeguard the welfare of the children that the school comes into contact with
- To contact parents/carers on the first day of absence to ascertain reasons for missing school
- To work with pupils on a one-to-one or group basis to identify and work out any barriers to good school attendance
- To be an integral part of schemes and initiatives in the school aimed at improving pupil attendance and improving punctuality
- To liaise with teachers over the attendance of pupils and to establish early contact with parents/carers
- To assist in the development and evaluation of strategies aimed at resolving issues relating to non-attendance and lateness
- To assist in the speedy and effective exchange of pupil information between schools following the transfer of a pupil
- To assist in the induction of children into the school with regard to the general ethos of the school, rules and behaviour guidelines
- To work in partnership with pupils, parents/carers, school staff, the Local Authority, relevant agencies and support units
- To support and motivate parents on matters relating to attendance and behaviour
- To prepare and present reports as necessary, to maintain appropriate records and statistics
- To assist the Head Teacher in the preparation of information relating to attendance
- To have due regard to confidentiality, child protection procedures, health and safety issues, appropriate statutory requirements and relevant policies of the Local Authority.

## 11. Rewarding Good Attendance and Punctuality

As well as taking appropriate action against parents who fail to secure the regular attendance of their children, we will take steps to reward good attendance and punctuality at Whinfield Primary School.

This will take the form of inclusion in half termly celebration assemblies.

## 12. Improving Punctuality

- When children are regularly late for school weekly or a pattern is emerging over a period of time, the school office will bring this to the attention of the designated member of staff who will then arrange an appointment to discuss this with the parents/carers
- If unauthorised lateness persists it may be necessary for the school to Register the child as a Cause for Concern and invite the parent/carer to come into school to discuss targets set for their child
- However, if this causes no improvement or if the improvement is short lived then the members of staff responsible for attendance will bring it to the attention of Brian Dean at one of their regular meetings
- There will be regular half termly reviews of the achievement of the targets set.

Registers will be completed as quickly as convenient, preceding both daily sessions. Only 10 minutes of the school day have been allocated for the registration procedure. Using the SIMS system registers will be electronically sent to the office as soon as practicable. Registers will be closed by office staff 15 minutes after the start of each session.

Children arriving at school after close of registration must report to the school office. The school office adds their names to the late book for reasons of safety, fire evacuation etc. They will not be counted as present on registers. An explanatory note may authorise this absence, e.g. visit to doctor/dentist. Otherwise it will be treated as unauthorised.

**A list of symbols used for demarcating AUTHORISED absence is included as Appendix 2 in this document. Only school can authorise an absence. If an absence does not fit one of the categories listed, it is likely to be UNAUTHORISED e.g. shopping, birthday. Check with Head Teacher if unsure.**

Parents removing their child from school during a session will be required to explain to their child's class teacher the reasons for this removal.

If the child returns to school with no notification of the reason for absence and through a number of telephone calls to the parent/carer school has not been able to establish a valid reason the absence will not be authorised.

Any regular authorised absence or any notes or occurrences which give cause for concern should be brought to the attention of the Head Teacher who may decide to pursue it further or refer the problem to the LA ( Brian Dean) .

### **13. Attendance Targets**

Attendance Targets for 2018 - 2019 are 96%

To enable Whinfield Primary School to achieve these targets, these systems have been developed to provide detailed robust data on school attendance:

- The Head Teacher will regularly report to the *Governors*
- Pupils whose attendance is being monitored are aware of their targets for improvement. Attendance is published annually and is also made available to all through inclusion in the school newsletter
- Good and improved attendance is celebrated throughout the school
- Information for parents on the importance of attendance and punctuality is regularly sent home to parents of pupils who demonstrate an attendance or punctuality concern.

## APPENDIX 1

### REGISTRATION PROCEDURE / LESSON MONITORING

1. Registers will be completed as quickly as convenient, preceding both daily sessions. Registers will be electronically sent to the office following the registration period
2. Children arriving at the school after registration in the mornings must report to the school office where they will be signed in the late book by the accompanying parent. All late arrivals will be so marked in the registers by the office staff

If pupils arrive after close of registration, they will be marked as absent. An explanation note may authorise this absence, e.g. visit to doctor/dentist. Otherwise it will be treated as unauthorised. However, if a child should arrive part way through a session, a note must be made in the signing in and out book and in the register to show that the child is present for safety purposes e.g. fire evacuations.

3. Once we receive a valid reason for an absence, we may authorise that absence. Reporting by telephone, verbally to a member of staff or a note are acceptable

If no reason is received for a child's absence, the school will contact parents by telephone. If contact cannot be made by telephone, a referral will be made.

A list of symbols used for demarcating AUTHORISED absence is included in Appendix 2 in this document. Only the Head Teacher can authorise absence. If an absence does not fit one of the categories listed, it is likely to be UNAUTHORISED e.g. shopping, birthday.

4. Parents removing their child from school during a session will be required to explain to Mrs Hosey the reasons for this removal
5. If no reason is forthcoming following the intervention of the school the absence must be recorded as UNAUTHORISED.
6. Any regular authorised absence or any notes or occurrences which give cause for concern should be mentioned to the Head Teacher. If it is felt action is required, the school may decide to pursue it further or refer the concerns to Brian Dean.

## APPENDIX 2

### ATTENDANCE CODES, DESCRIPTIONS AND MEANINGS

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental Appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

### Appendix 3

To be added by SENCO.

