

WEST LANCASHIRE COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL

PUPIL ABSENCE POLICY

Introduction:

West Lancashire Community High School 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 so important:

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. Regular school attendance is essential if children/young persons are to achieve their full potential.

The Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age. 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.

Promoting Regular Attendance:

Regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

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

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance;
- Give you details on attendance in our regular newsletter;
- Report to you annually 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 individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through certificates and rewards.
- Carry out transition work with pupils moving from Primary to high school and before leaving for colleges/further education.
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and

school

- Make attendance and punctuality a matter and priority for the whole school community (parents, pupils, staff and governors)
- Set targets to improve individual pupil and whole-school attendance.
- For those children who are struggling to attend school full time due to their complex medical needs, school and their parents/carers may discuss flexible hours. When a parent seeks a reduction in hours or days, the school and health professionals will look at the individual child and their needs and work with the parents to provide appropriate education for their child. The child's needs are the priority, rather than achieving full time attendance figures. Absence from school in these circumstances will be authorised.

Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority 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 after the register has closed
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- holidays that exceed the amount agreed by the Headteacher

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 school it is better to speak to school to resolve the issue, rather than trying to cover up their absence, or give in to pressure to let them stay at home. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 15% or more of their 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, therefore any pupil whose attendance indicates they are likely to reach the PA threshold we will be given priority consideration, and parents will be informed of this immediately.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support, individual incentive programmes, parenting contracts and SEAL programs around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Local Authority School Attendance Team.

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence, either by phone or you can call into school and report to reception

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Contact you via post, if we have not heard from you within 3 days.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the Headteacher if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority School Attendance Team where appropriate as per Local Authority protocol.

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.

In-School Strategies to Improve Attendance/Punctuality (see appendix):

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. School may consider using the following strategies to help support parents in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality. This includes:

- Meetings in school between parents, pupils, pastoral staff and the Headteacher;
- Parenting contracts;
- Use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and/ or referral to outside agencies (including the Local Authority School Attendance Team)
- Penalty notices

The Local Authority School Attendance Team:

If difficulties cannot be sorted out using in-school strategies, the school may refer the child to the Pupil Attendance Support Team (PAST). They will 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 case may be referred to the Court Officers, who can 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.

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, which can be embarrassing for the child and can in turn, encourage absence. Being 10 minutes late every day throughout the academic year is the same as missing two weeks of school.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at **9.00am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked by **9.10am** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.30am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a 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. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher and/or a member of the pastoral support team to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Holidays in Term Time:

The Government has amended key legislation relating specifically to the authorisation of leave in term time which comes into force on 1st September 2013¹. This decision has been made to encourage schools to take a firmer stance on unnecessary absence and to dispel the myth held by many parents that there is an entitlement to time off school for holidays in term time.

As of 1st September 2013 Headteachers cannot authorise any leave of absence during term time unless they are satisfied that there are "exceptional circumstances" to warrant the granting of leave.

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by trying not to take children away in school time. 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.

¹ [The Education \(Pupil Registration\)\(England\) Registration Regulations 2006, as amended](#)

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. As from September 2013, amendments to the 2006 regulations

All applications for leave must be made in advance using the 'Request for leave of absence' form from the school office and, at the discretion of the school a maximum of 10 days in any academic year may be authorised but only in 'exceptional circumstances'.

In making a decision the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time.

We may agree up to 10 days "holiday leave" in exceptional circumstances such as:

- for service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside term-time if the holiday will have minimal disruption to the pupil's education; and
- when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis.

Holidays which are taken for the following reasons will **not** be authorised:

- availability of cheap holidays;
- availability of the desired accommodation;
- poor weather experienced in school holiday periods; and
- overlap with beginning or end of term.

Other circumstances when leave in term time will **not** be agreed by the school:

- When a pupil is just starting the school. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- Immediately before and during assessment periods (SATS), GCSE or any other public examinations.
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- Where a pupil's attendance rate is already below 90% or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking holiday leave.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

The school is to use the LCC guidance - Request for Leave of Absence from Maintained Schools documentation.

Extended Leave in Term Time:

Only in 'exceptional' circumstances will 'leave' of over 10 days be authorised by the school. In certain circumstances, parents risk losing their child's place on the

school roll if the pupil does not return to school on the agreed return date, and readmission cannot be guaranteed. The specific circumstances which outline when a pupil can be removed from roll are laid out in Regulation 8 (1) (f) (i-iii) of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (Amended 2010)

Parents may also be asked to attend a meeting to discuss educational opportunities for their child whilst on extended leave.

Religious Absence:

The school will authorise one day 'leave' (i.e. the day set aside by the Religious Body of which the parent is a member) per religious festival, e.g. Eid, but no more than 3 days in any one academic year. Parents must request this leave in advance.

Roles and responsibilities for attendance matters in this school:

Parents:

- Ensure children attend regularly and punctually
- Contact school on 1st day of absence
- Avoid holidays in term time wherever possible and apply in advance using form
- Attendance at meetings in school
- Participation in Parenting Contracts and Common Assessment Framework, and cooperate in support and interventions offered by school or other agencies

Pupils:

- Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school, e.g. early bedtime
- Attend school/registration punctually
- Speak to parents/teacher if issues arise that may have an effect on school attendance
- Cooperate and participate in interventions and support offered by school or other agencies

Headteacher / (School Attendance Lead):

- Take the lead in ensuring attendance has a high profile within the school
- Ensure there are designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for attendance matters
- Ensure adequate, protected time is allocated to discharge these responsibilities
- Take overall responsibility for ensuring the school confirms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance

Designated Staff:

- First day response: Contact parents if a reason for absence has not been provided
- Third Day Response: Contact parents by post if a reason for absence has still not been provided.
- Input and update the attendance registers
- Regularly identify and monitor pupil, class and whole school attendance and punctuality levels, particularly that of vulnerable groups
- Regularly communicate pupil attendance and punctuality levels to parents
- Work with children and parents to remove barriers to regular and punctual attendance, following Absence Flowcharts 1, 2 and 3 (see appendix), and using Parenting Contracts where appropriate.

All School Staff:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children and provide a safe learning environment
- Ensure an appropriate and responsive curriculum
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils' concerns
- To be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance
- To see pupils' attendance as the responsibility of **all** school staff
- Participate in training regarding school systems and procedures

Governors

- Adopt the whole-school policy and review regularly
- Monitor the consistent implementation of the attendance policy
- Set aspirational targets for improving the school's attendance figures

School targets, projects and special initiatives:

The school has targets 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 **90%** attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

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

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 newsletter and we ask for your full support.

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 this is the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Reviewed Autumn 2014

Next review Autumn 2017