



Believe, Belong, Be Kind

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Policy date: August 2024

Review date: August 2025

Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Wheelock Primary School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from Cheshire East Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Principal and governors at our school work together, with other professionals and agencies, to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning. A child who is 10 minutes late each day, misses 5 hours of learning in a 6-week half term.

Aims and objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff, governors and parents in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality, through careful and regular monitoring of attendance.
- Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Report authorised and unauthorised absence to parents on the child's end of year report.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff, attendance consultants and the Local Authority so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement

and dealing with difficulties.

- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.
- Report on attendance to governors, termly.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents understand the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and LAB Members on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

Definitions

Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the Principal (or their delegated authority) can make an absence authorised. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.
- Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Procedures

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes – using Arbor 'take register' at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.

- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness (8:50 – 9:10 will be recorded as late; after 9:10 will be recorded as unauthorised).

- To follow up absences and persistent lateness, if parents/carers have not communicated with the school, through first day absence telephone calls.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence, through holidays taken during term time, through the use of Penalty Notices.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupil's attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve and where appropriate to the Local Authority.
- To report attendance statistics to The Learning Partnership, East Cheshire LA and the DfE, where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Leadership Team with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Class teacher

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Taking the register, using Arbor take register, twice a day and ensuring that the register is accurate and closed by 8:50am and 1.05pm.
- Staff will mark a child as present if they are in the classroom at 8:45am and 1.00pm.
- If a child is absent, without prior notification, staff will mark a child as absent using 'O'. If a reason has been given, then the appropriate code should be used, and a comment should be added by a member of the admin team, using the 'comment' facility. If no reason is provided, then the 'O' code will remain and it will be unauthorised.
- In the event of an Arbor failure, class teacher should use a pre-prepared class list, which is kept in the plastic register wallets, and manually take the register.
- Maintaining the security of their Arbor login and not using a login belonging to another member of staff.
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers.
- Informing the Leadership Team where there are concerns and acting upon them / recording them on CPOMs safeguarding server.
- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns.

- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register.
- Discussing attendance issues at parent – teacher consultation evenings where necessary.

Principal

The Principal is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance.
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- Ensuring the safeguarding and learning mentor is monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised.
- Ensuring the Safeguarding and Learning Mentor is sending out standard letters regarding attendance.
- Ensuring the safeguarding and learning mentor is making referrals to the EWO and Local Authority as applicable.
- Ensuring the safeguarding and learning mentor is providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's EWO.
- Supporting, when needed, the safeguarding and learning mentor, to liaise with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

Administration staff

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Checking that the morning and afternoon registers have been completed and printing copies for use in the event of an evacuation, and for archiving.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence and recording these on Arbor, within 30 minutes of receiving the message.
- Ensuring absence/late information is transferred to Arbor, using the minutes late / comments, within 30 minutes of receiving the information.
- Contacting parents of absent children by 9.30am, where no contact has been made by the parents, and recording this on Arbor using the comments facility.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home, using Arbor comments, at the point at which they arrive or leave.

Parents

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

Parents have a legal responsibility for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education, our aim is to promote this and support. This links to statutory guidance, 'Parental responsibility measures' and the new DFE 2024 'Working together to improve school attendance'. This guidance is extremely clear, consequently, we have place 'tiers of support'.

Our Safeguarding and Learning Mentor, Miss Sheridan, is key contact; however, all members of staff are here to support.

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence by 9.30am.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Registration

Members of staff will be at the classroom door from 8:35. Classroom doors will close at 8:45am and the school gate will be locked at 8:50am. If your child arrives at school after 8:45, they should report to the main entrance. Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. The attendance register must be completed and saved by the class teacher by 8:50 am and by 1:05pm. (Attendance code / and \ (for pupils who are present). All attendance records are documented using Arbor software are legal documents and they must not be changed after registration period, except by a member of the admin team or through a direct instruction issued by a member of the Leadership Team.

Lateness

Once the doors are closed at 8:45am, the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school this way will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 9.10am will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U). Children who have attended a medical appointment and subsequently come to school later than 8.45am, will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning and often feel uncomfortable walking into a lesson or assembly which has already started.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

Absences

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence. Being 'poorly' is not a reason for absence; precise details need to be given for the school to accurately complete the statutory register.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Principal has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

First-Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence.

Illness

If a child is absent from school with an illness for a few weeks the school will not send home work to be completed. When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work. If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has had 5 or more days (10 sessions or more) of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

Addressing attendance concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 96%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Principal and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In primary school we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns. 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 to be given by the school with the aim

to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the School Attendance Consultant and Cheshire East Local Authority.

The Local Authority will issue penalty notices to parents/carers where there has been a referral from the school as part of the school's processes to address poor attendance patterns.

The EWO visits regularly to check and monitor attendance. She carries out regular register checks to identify children with low attendance (usually below 90%). She works with the school to improve attendance, and you may be invited to an Attendance Support Meeting to look at how school can support you and your child in securing regular school attendance. It is our duty to inform you that 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 either by regular attendance at school or otherwise".

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE – PENALTY NOTICES

Parents/carers should be aware that Wheelock Primary School may contact the Local Authority if a pupil has 10 or more unauthorised absences in any one term, with a view to issuing a Penalty Notice. The Penalty Notice is issued individually to each parent/carer who fails to ensure their children's regular attendance at school. Please see the next page for the penalty notice protocols.

Parental Request for Exceptional Leave of Absence in Term Time

The Principal will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist.

If you wish to request any leave of absence in term time please complete the form in school and return it before the leave is taken. This form is available from the school office.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that principals may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Principals should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Principals have the discretion to grant leave, but they should only do so in exceptional circumstances.

If the Principal grants a leave request, it will be for them to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school. This leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

When the Principal is considering exceptional term time leave requests, the following factors will help to reach a decision:

- Time of the academic year when the leave has been requested
- Duration of the absence – number of school days being missed
- The child's current attendance and punctuality rate

- Exceptional Term time leave requested/taken in previous academic years for a similar purpose
- Whether parent/carers have considered limiting the amount of time the child would be absent from school e.g. wrapping around school holiday
- Have alternative care arrangements been considered by the parent/carer to limit the time away from school
- Impact on any interventions, assessments or referrals being undertaken with the child or family e.g. family support, social care assessments, CAMHS, SEND
- The impact that the absence will have on the child.

With the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices, the following changes will come into force on 19 August 2024.

Penalty Notices will be issued for

Term time leave: Penalty Notice fines will be issued for term time leave of 5 or more consecutive days.

10 Sessions of Unauthorised absence in a rolling 10 week period: A Penalty Notices may be considered when there have been 10 sessions of unauthorised absences in a 10 week period.

However, we retain the discretion to issue a Penalty Notice before the threshold is met. For example, where parents are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below the above thresholds.

Per Parent/Per Child

Penalty Notice fines will continue to be issued per parent per child. For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.

First Offence

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for term time leave or irregular school attendance the fine will be charged at:

£160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days of the issue, reducing to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

(Unpaid penalty notices may result in a parental prosecution)

Second Offence

Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second penalty notice to the same parent for the same pupil within 3 years of the first penalty notice, for either term time leave or irregular attendance the second penalty notice will be charged at:

£160 if paid within 28 days. (Unpaid penalty notices may result in a parental prosecution)

Third Offence

On the third time that an offence is committed within 3 years of the first penalty notice for either a term time leave or irregular attendance a penalty notice will not be issued. The case may proceed to Parental Prosecution under the Single Justice Procedure. If found guilty of the offence of 'Failure to send a child to school' the Magistrates can impose a fine up to £1000 or legal proceedings under Section 444 (1a) can include a fine of up to £2500.

Reporting Attendance

Our office staff, have the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the Arbor attendance software and reported accordingly. Regular meetings are held with the Safeguarding and Learning Mentor to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

- The annual return is completed for the Department for Education in May.
- An attendance report is included in every child's end of year report.
- Schools must now report to the LA any child who has had over 10 sessions (equivalent to 5 days) of unauthorised absence in a given period.