



Attendance Policy

Date : Autumn 2017

Date to be reviewed : Autumn 2018

Introduction

We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the best progress possible. To do this it is essential that a child's time at school is maximised and even short absences can have a detrimental effect on children's learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines, so, in addition to affecting your own child, it may also affect the learning of others in the same class. Early poor attendance habits follow right through from primary to secondary school and into employment.

We expect all children to be at school, and on time, every day that the school is open, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage children to attend.

At Whoberley Hall Primary School, we believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will reward those children whose attendance is very good, for example, class certificates, termly 100% attendance prizes, and 100% yearly trophies. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

Legal Requirements and Local Authority Policy

- 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.
- Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, the governing body is responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.
- There is no automatic right to any leave of absence and all schools in Coventry are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising exceptional leave. Being mindful of this, only in very exceptional circumstances will the school grant leave of absence during term time.
- Further guidance can be found in the school's Exceptional Leave Policy.
- Any leave taken without authorisation may lead to parents being issued a fixed penalty, which is currently £60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days. After 21 days and up to 28 days this will increase to £120 per parent per child.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice could result in Coventry City Council starting legal proceedings against parents for the offence of failing to ensure their child's regular attendance at school.

What are Authorised and Unauthorised Absence?

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 guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not make it an authorised absence.

Unauthorised absence

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

Procedures

- At Whoberley Hall Primary the school day begins at 8.55 am
- The register is taken once the children have settled into class. If a child is not present when the register is taken they are given a late mark.
- The afternoon session begins at 1.00pm for Reception & Year 1 and 1.15 pm for Years 2-6 and the same procedures applies.
- The morning session at Nursery begins at 8.55.

If a child is absent without notification

- Where no notification has been received by 9.30 am parents may receive a telephone call to ascertain the reason for the child's absence.

Missing children

- If a child is missing and their whereabouts are unknown, the school will follow the Local Authority procedures in taking steps to locate that child as soon as possible.

Written Notification of absence

- When the child returns to school, a note must be brought from a parent or guardian to explain the absence.
- Where the absence is because of a pre-arranged medical appointment, for example, the note should be sent to the school prior to the day of absence.

Requests for exceptional leave of absence

- If parents wish to take their child out of school during term time, a request for leave of absence must be made on the appropriate form at least 4 weeks before the exceptional leave is due to begin, except in an emergency, in which case the application will be considered on an individual basis. Application forms can be obtained from the School Office.
- The appropriate information and documentation must be provided to back up the application. For details see Exceptional Leave Policy.

Long-term absence through Child's Accident or illness

If a child is under the care of a hospital Consultant and a Consultant's letter has been produced, and the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or to be a repetitive absence, the school may contact the support services so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.

Repeated unauthorised absences

- The school will contact the parent or guardian of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or guardians will be asked to visit the school and discuss the issue. If the situation does not improve, the school will then contact the LA support services, who may visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents or guardians understand the seriousness of the situation.
- The governors, supported by the Local Authority, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis. There is a fast track to court procedure for parents of pupils whose attendance falls below the expected levels.
- A Penalty Notice can be issued for truancy, parentally condoned absence and persistent late arrival at school.

Rewards for good attendance

- All the children who have 100 per cent attendance in any one term will receive a certificate for attendance. There are special awards for any child who has 100 per cent attendance for a whole year.
- The class with the highest attendance will receive a cup on a weekly basis.
- Attendance of 97% or above is recognised within the school.

Attendance targets

- The school have specific targets around % of attendance for the school to work towards, this is usually prompted by the overall national %. Attendance is an area that OFSTED will look at. There are various initiatives adopted by school in order to support parents in improving their children's attendance this includes sending out letters to parents once attendance falls below a certain %.

Monitoring

- It is the responsibility of the governing body to monitor overall attendance and the head teacher will produce a termly report. The governing body also has the responsibility for seeing that this is carried out. A link Governor for attendance will therefore examine the information provided in the report to satisfy themselves that attendance meets the required levels alongside weekly review meetings with the Headteacher and attendance officers.
- The school will keep accurate attendance records for a minimum period of three years.
- The rates of attendance will be reported in the school Newsletter on a weekly basis and in the termly governors' report.
- Class teachers are responsible for monitoring attendance in their class, as well as for taking action on day-to-day absences, according to the school's procedures. School staff receive regular training in regards to attendance policy and procedures. If there is a longer-term worry about the attendance of a particular child, they must report this to the headteacher, who will contact the parents or guardians.

Providing Information to Parents

- The importance placed upon regular attendance and punctuality is explained and discussed with parents when they first enrol their children, in welcome meetings, school prospectus, council leaflets and school letters.

Information relating to school terms, holidays, school hours and sessions is regularly issued at school.

Exceptional Leave Policy

Exceptional leave during the School Day

- Parents are expected to arrange medical appointments out of school hours where possible. Children must not be taken out of school without a previously written agreement (unless in an emergency). Parents must report to the school office, enabling the school staff to collect children from the classroom. On return to school during the day parents must inform the school secretary so that the register can be adjusted accordingly.
- Parents should inform the school office of any unexpected events which may result in a delayed return to school.

Exceptional leave during Term Time

- We follow Local Authority guidance on parents taking children out of school for holidays during term time, which is not to authorise, and absence for this purpose will be treated as unauthorised absence. Consequently, parents may receive a Fixed Penalty Notice from the Children and Families First Service (see school's Attendance Policy)
- Exceptional Leave of absence will only be authorised in very exceptional circumstances.

Requests for Exceptional Leave

- Except in an emergency, permission must be sought from the school at least 4 weeks before the exceptional leave is due to begin and in advance of making any arrangements. The request must be made on an Exceptional Leave of Absence Form, which can be obtained from the school office.
- Evidence of any travel bookings, if applicable, may be requested by the school.
- Each request for exceptional leave of absence is considered by the Headteacher and link Governor. Should the request fall outside the criteria set out in the school's Attendance Policy, the application will be considered by a governor on behalf of the Governing Body. Reasons for exceptional leave will be logged on the child's records and will be shared as part of the transfer/transition process.

