

WEST STAFFORD MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST (WSMAT)

GNOSALL ST. LAWRENCE CE PRIMARY SCHOOL
WOODSEAVES PRIMARY SCHOOL
HAUGHTON ST.GILES PRIMARY SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY APRIL 2015

Legal Framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday.

Information for Parents*/Carers

As a school we aim to:

Maintain an attendance rate of a minimum of 95%.

Maintain parents' and pupils' awareness of the importance of regular attendance.

Maintain good time keeping.

Good attendance is important because:

Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and poor attendance.

Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically.

Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with.

Regular attenders find learning more satisfying.

Regular attenders settle into Secondary school more easily.

Your child's Individual School Attendance Target is 95% or more.

**Throughout this policy any reference to 'parent/s' refers to the person or people with Parental Responsibility.*

As a parent you can help us by:

- Ensuring your child attends school regularly. Absence should only happen when your child is significantly ill and therefore unfit to attend school, or if there is an unavoidable/unforeseen reason or circumstance which is causing a difficulty/period of difficulty.
- Telephoning the school on each day of any absence to give us the reason and tell us when the child is likely to return to school. Please contact school by 9.30am.
- Arranging all non-emergency medical appointments out of school hours or during school holidays. For any medical appointments that are unable to occur out of school hours, please provide sight of the appointment letter/card to the school.
- Frequent absence claimed as illness must be supported by medical evidence. This can be in the form of a medical appointment card or sight of the child's medication (as advised by the Department for Education.)
- Keeping us updated by telephone or letter if your child has any extended period of absence.
- Making sure we always have your current contact numbers; this includes all telephone numbers, child minders and emergency contact details.

We shall:

- Follow up unexplained absences by phone calls and letters as necessary. Please be aware that if we are unable to establish the reason for your child's absence from school, this is considered a safeguarding matter of your child which we, as a school, have to act upon.
- Remind parents of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality in our school correspondence (e.g. newsletters).
- Publish our attendance rate in the school profile each year.
- Acknowledge / reward good attendance and punctuality.
- Publish your child's attendance rate on her/his pupil reports.
- Contact parents if we have concerns regarding your child's attendance and punctuality, particularly if your child's attendance falls below the target level.
- If we continue to have concerns we may make a referral to our Independent Attendance Consultant or to the Local Authority Education Welfare Worker. These officers may visit you at home to investigate the reasons for your child's poor attendance.

School Registers

School registers are a legal document and we are required to take the attendance register twice a day. This is coded to show whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off site or absent. If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent, every half day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Only school can authorise the absence, not parents. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised Absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised Absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This includes;

- Waiting for a delivery
- Going for a family day out
- Children who arrive at school after the registers have closed
- Going shopping or for a hair cut
- Because it is your child's birthday
- Term time holiday/Cheap flights
- Parent's illness

Where there is no explanation for an absence or where the explanation or reason for the absence is considered unsatisfactory, absence will be recorded as 'unauthorized'. Unauthorized Absences have to be reported to the Local Authority. The Local Authority or our Independent Attendance Consultant may contact you where unauthorized absence continues to be a problem. Unauthorised absence could result in a Penalty Notice Fine or other legal action.

Safeguarding

Schools have a duty in law to refer any absence of 10 days or more where they have been unable to make contact with the parent/child or have general concerns about the absence to the Local Authority Safeguarding team / Education Welfare Worker.

Our first day contact procedures ensure that by contacting parents to establish the reason for your child's absence, parents are made aware that the child is absent from school. Therefore this enables the parent where necessary to establish their child is safe. **If we as a school do not receive communication from a parent regarding their child's absence, and if we as a school are unsuccessful in contacting the parent, we will have a duty to refer your child as a 'safeguarding'**

concern to the First Response team. This is why our system of requesting parents contact our school on each day of absence, prior to 9.30am is so important.

Punctuality

- It is important to be on time as the first part of the school day is used to give out instructions or organize schoolwork for the rest that day. It is also a time for children to settle down by reading or another quiet activity so they are ready for lessons immediately after registration.
- **Morning registration ends at 8.55am.** Your child will be registered as 'late' if they are not in school by 8.55am. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and often embarrassing for your child. We take the view there are no late children, only late parents.
- Our registers will close at 9.10am. Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as an unauthorized absence code 'U' in line with the DFE guidance.
- If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Head teacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child into school on time.
- All lateness is recorded daily. The number of minutes late and the reason for lateness if known will also be recorded. This information can be made available to the courts in the form of a report, should a prosecution be the outcome of repeated lateness.

Please collect your child promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns with other agencies.

Supporting and encouraging your child's school attendance.

All children can sometimes be reluctant to attend school, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to the pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Permitting absence from school without good reason is an offence by the parent.

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the school at an early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems.

Parents may also contact the Local Authority support services / Education Welfare Worker directly to request support / advice.

Persistent Absence (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. This is defined by the Department for Education. Absence at this level (90% or below) is doing considerable damage to any child's education and we need parents/carers full support and co-operation to tackle this.

Referral to the Local Authority Education Welfare Worker

If school attendance difficulties cannot be improved the school may refer the child to the Education Welfare Worker from the Local Authority. If attempts to improve the child's attendance has failed, these Officers can issue Penalty Notices or use court proceedings to prosecute parents, (under the Education Act 1996 s444 / s4441a,) or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and / or 3 months imprisonment.

Exceptional Leave - Term Time Leave of Absence

We are always concerned about the amount of school time pupils miss as a result of term time leave. There is no entitlement to time off during term time. Leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Head teacher in accordance with the DFE guidance.

It is our policy:

- Only in an exceptional circumstance will term time leave be allowed.
- Parents/Carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form well in advance (with a minimum of 2 week's notice) and before booking tickets or making travel arrangements. The Head teacher will advise you of their decision to authorise or unauthorised the absence - this may require you to attend a meeting to discuss this.
- The cheaper cost of holidays in term time is not an acceptable reason for an application.
- No leave of absence will be authorised during any assessment periods.
- Every request will be treated individually on its own merits and the full circumstances will not be made public.
- Alongside your request of leave for 'exceptional' circumstances we may require written evidence/confirmation of the detail of the exceptional circumstances e.g. information from your employer / evidence of a special one off occasion.

Please remember that absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his/her learning. Valuable learning time is lost. A good understanding of the work and good progress can only take place when the child is in the classroom regularly and on time.

If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and you may be liable for a penalty notice fine (issued by the Local Authority.) If you choose not to pay the fine you may face prosecution if the absence meets the criteria set out in the Local Authorities Code of Conduct.

You have the right to make representations to the Chair of Governors if you feel the Head teacher's decision is unjust, however the final decision lies with the Head teacher and the Local Authority.

Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices are fines, only issued by the Locality Support Team, on behalf of the Local Authority, for a child's unauthorised absence from school.

Penalty Notices can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence. (£60 per parent, per child.)

The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. The payment must be paid direct to the local authority.

There is no right of appeal by parents against a penalty notice. If the penalty notice is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period, the local authority will prosecute for the original offence, unless there are grounds to withdraw the notice.

Penalty Notices for leave of absence (holiday) in term time.

The evidence of 10 sessions of unauthorised absence (within the last 3 terms, regardless of the academic year) could trigger a Penalty Notice.

There is no longer a limit to the number of Penalty Notices that can be issued to a parent during the academic year.

Penalty Notices for Persistent Absence.

Parents whose child is repeatedly absent will now only receive one warning notice period to bring about improvement in attendance in a single academic year. If attendance deteriorates then no further formal warning notice will be issued and the Local Authority can automatically consider the statutory actions if unauthorized absence re-occurs.

Schools follow the Staffordshire Local Authority code of conduct for the procedures of Penalty Notices. Details of this can be obtained from:

<http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education/welfareservice/Attendance/home.aspx>

The Local Authority will continue to monitor all school attendance and take appropriate action for absences during term time, both to support head teachers in their role and in challenging the small minority of parents that choose to disregard the law.

Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than at the end of Year 6 to go to High School) parents are asked to:

- Give the school comprehensive information about their plans including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing.

When pupils leave and we do not have information, about where they have gone, then your child is considered to be a 'Child Missing Education'. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations, which will include liaising with

Children's Services (formerly Social Services), the Police and other agencies, to try and locate your child.

By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Pyramid Working

We work closely with all schools within our pyramid as well as the Stafford Heads group of schools to share good practice in relation to school attendance matters.

Colour Coded Attendance Guidance

We have adopted the below colour coded guidance for a child's school attendance. We have found this to be a good visual indicator to parents of the meaning of their child's level of attendance. We would like all of our pupils to achieve the 'green' category of attendance, where possible. Our aim for this high level of attendance links the importance of attendance with children's potential learning and attainment.

No. of days Absent from school.	Attendance %		
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0 days	100 %	Outstanding Attendance	Gives a child the very best chance of success.
9.5 days	95%	Good Attendance	Few interruptions to learning – a very good chance of success.
13.3 days	93%	Worrying attendance	Your child has missed almost 3 weeks of learning.
19 days (or more)	90% or less	Serious concern	Persistent Absence Pupil (as defined by the DfE.) This is worrying attendance. A child has had the equivalent of one day off school every fortnight / almost 4 weeks off school (or more). It is less likely that good progress in learning can be made.

Attendance Data Analysis

We conduct a full attendance review of our school at least every half term of all pupils below 95% attendance, or those with a concerning level of 'broken weeks' attendance.

We analyse class attendance, whole school attendance, annual / termly attendance, vulnerable groups and we conduct a code analysis for comparative purposes of specific coded absences.

Persistent Absence pupils are tracked and procedures are in place to ensure we are aware of the circumstances of the pupil's poor attendance and that support processes are in place to tackle the issues.

We also compare our attendance data with other similar schools via Raise online.

Our attendance figures are published publicly and our Ofsted report is also available for parents to view.

School Staff Responsible for Attendance matters are;

Headteachers
School Attendance Officers
Your Child's Class Teacher
School Governors.

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. School

staff are committed to working with parents supportively to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

We value your support in helping us to maintain the high standards to which we always aspire.

“Every day counts and Every Child Matters!”

Author: Trina Grainger, Independent Education Attendance Consultant,
Attend Every Day Counts.

Date: 1st April 2015.

Signed: Head teacher: PGallant

Signed Chair of Governor: Rev. K Hammond

(Policy to be reviewed every 2 years.) (Review date: April 2017.)