


Walton Priory Middle School



Attendance Policy

Date of Approval	March 2024	Next Review Date	March 2025
Approved by	Chair of Governors	Signed	

Aim

- The aim of this policy is to encourage pupils to attend school every day (190 days per year) and to be able to take full advantage of the opportunities available. Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement and it is also essential in order for pupils to maximise their chances of success. There is clear evidence showing strong links between excellent exam results and excellent school attendance.

Key Personnel

- **Headteacher** The Headteacher is the only person who can authorise leave in 'exceptional circumstances'
- **SLT Link** The SLT link for attendance is Mr Toby Kemp
- **Attendance Officer** The Attendance Officer is Mrs Caroline Warrilow
- **Education Welfare Worker** The school employs "VIP" as its EWO service

Duties

- The Education Act 1996 requires parents and guardians to ensure that their children receive efficient, full-time education. Parents/Guardians are responsible for their child's school attendance and punctuality. Schools are responsible for recording pupil attendance twice a day: once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. An entry must be made in the attendance register for all pupils of compulsory school age who are on the school's roll. In addition, lesson registers are taken each lesson using Arbor.

Principles

- Regular and full attendance at school is an essential part of being able to deliver a good education to pupils. Teaching and learning become increasingly difficult when attendance is poor
- By law all children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) must get a proper full-time education. Parents have a legal duty under Section 7 of the Education Act of 1996 to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full-time basis either by registering the child at school or by making other arrangements which provide an effective education
- Parents do not have the right to take children out of school for a family holiday
- Unauthorised absence from school is an offence and parents can be reported to the LEA when there are persistent attendance problems
- Every absence from school must be classified by the school. It is the school that decides if an attendance is unauthorised

- Problems with attendance are best resolved by discussion between the school, parents and the pupil
- The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) is available to help the school, parents and pupils resolve problems with attendance.

Responsibilities

The school will ensure that:

- Pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- Attendance targets are set for individual pupils and year groups
- Attendance and punctuality data are regularly reviewed and support is available for pupils with attendance below 96% or have a pattern of lateness
- We take lesson attendance regularly throughout the day. Parents are able to see their child's attendance/absence patterns via the Arbor app.

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school regularly and be registered punctually
- Inform staff if there is a problem that may lead to absences.

The Parents or Guardians will:

- Ensure good attendance (97% and above)
- Inform the school on each day of absence and give specific reason
- Discuss planned absences with the school in advance and seek the appropriate leave of absence in good time.

School Day:

- The school day for pupils begins at 8.30am — by this time all pupils should be on the school's premises
- Pupils entering the school premises after the end of "Registration Bell" at 8.45 will be marked as late for school
- Afternoon registration takes place at 12.45pm for Key Stage 2 pupils and at 1.30pm for Key Stage 3 pupils
- The school day ends at 3.15pm.

Form Tutors:

- Form Tutors have the responsibility of registering pupils' attendance at the beginning of the morning session

- Form Tutors will ensure that the registers are completed in accordance with the appropriate regulations.
- Form Tutors have a major role to play in encouraging pupils to be punctual and to attend school each day
- Absence notes from parents will be checked by Form Tutors for their authenticity and will be passed to the Attendance Officer for filing
- Form Tutors will bring to the attention of the Attendance Officer those pupils who are either late for registration or who are absent.

The Attendance Officer:

- Will liaise closely with Form Tutors in checking that registers are completed accurately and that they are kept in a safe place
- Will ensure that the registers are available for scrutiny and for emergencies e.g. for fire drills
- Will ensure that all absence notes are stored in a secure place
- Is responsible for notifying the SLT Attendance link of attendance problems
- Is responsible for discussing with Form Tutors problems relating to pupil attendance and the accurate record keeping of registers
- Will refer concerning absence to VIP EWO service.

Punctuality:

- All pupils are expected to be punctual to school (8.30am) and to lessons
- Pupils arriving after the registration bell at 8.45am will be marked as late using an L code
- Pupils arriving after registers close at 9.05am will be marked as an unauthorised absence and the absence must be explained by parental contact. This will be coded as a U.

Attendance Procedures

- Parents are asked to telephone school before 9.25am at the latest to notify us of a child's absence
- Authorised absence, eg, illness, must be supported by a letter from the parents explaining the reason for the absence
- Pupils who wish to leave the premises during the school day will be expected to bring a letter from their parents notifying the form tutor
- Pupils arriving at school after registration should sign in at the general office and should sign out if leaving the premises before the end of the school day
- Where parents fail to make contact providing a reason for absence, the School Attendance Officer will endeavour to contact them
- Where a child's attendance or punctuality is a cause for concern, or when a parent fails to notify the school of the reason for an absence, the school will contact "VIP" to further investigate. This will usually mean a home visit.

Unauthorised Absences

An absence will be recorded as unauthorised if:

- School has not given approval in advance for a pupil to be absent
- School does not accept a given explanation as satisfactory justification for absence
- Medical evidence requested by school is not forthcoming
- No explanation of absence is received within 5 days
- If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent, the register must show whether that absence is authorised or unauthorised. Parents may not authorise any absence. In cases where parents seem to condone unauthorised absence, school will involve the local authority education welfare officer
- The Governing Body have adopted the Government initiative of imposing penalty notices in cases of persistent unauthorised absence and persistent lateness to registration
- Parents will receive a written warning of the possibility of a penalty notice being issued and will have 20 days to ensure an improvement in attendance and / or punctuality. Failure to ensure improvement will lead to the issue of a penalty notice, with a maximum penalty of £1000 per parent
- Penalty notices (PN) are issued by the court officer to the family home. The fine for unauthorised absence currently stands at £120 per parent, per child. This amount is halved if paid within 21 days. Non-payment of the penalty within the 28 day time limit will trigger the prosecution process under the Provisions of Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act
- In circumstances where a PN has been served with no impact or attendance patterns show chronic poor attendance the school may request a prosecution through Section 444 (1) of the 1996 Education Act. This will result in prosecution through the courts if there is no improvement in attendance.

Leave of Absence

- Taking a child out of school in term time will affect their schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking 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
- Applications should be requested before any expenses are committed. Costs already incurred are not considered when a leave for absence request is reviewed
- There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to take leave during school time.
- All applications for leave must be made, in advance, by the parent.
- Parents who wish to apply for a leave of absence must complete the official request form. This can be collected from reception or downloaded from the school's website. Completed forms should be returned to the school's Attendance Officer at least 3 months before the proposed absence (where possible)
- Leave in term time will **not** be agreed by us at any time unless circumstances surrounding the request can be evidenced, by parents, to be exceptional

- A request for a leave of absence involving a pupil missing 4 or more days of school will not be authorised without a formal discussion between a parent/guardian and a member of the school's Senior Leadership Team.

In considering the request we will also look at various factors such as:

- The timing of the request
- When a pupil is just starting the school, absences should be avoided as this is a very important transition period as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible. Pupils should not be absent where possible both immediately before and during assessment periods e.g. SATs or any other public examinations
- Other periods of leave which the pupil may have had, either during the current or previous academic year
- A leave of absence will not be authorised retrospectively
- 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. Unauthorised absence is shown on reports and ultimately school references. 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. Readmission cannot be guaranteed
- Where school suspects unauthorised holidays have been taken a home visit may take place
- Any period of unauthorised absence can result in a fixed penalty notice if threshold is met
- A fixed penalty notice can be issued for 10 'U' marks over 12 weeks. The school follows the Staffordshire LA Code of Conduct for issuing fixed penalty notices
- 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 and 2013).

Children Missing in Education

Schools have a duty by law to refer any absence of 20 days or more to Staffordshire Local Authority Children Missing in Education department where they have been unable to establish contact with the parent/pupil or have general concerns about the absence.

To avoid any referrals, parents are requested to inform the school if they are moving house/area or country and to provide a forwarding address, contact number and the name of the new school if known.

Local authorities should:

- Provide such education as soon as it is clear that the child will be away from school for 15 days or more, whether consecutive or cumulative. They should liaise with appropriate medical professionals to ensure minimal delay in arranging appropriate provision for the child
- Ensure that the education children receive is of good quality, as defined in the DfE's statutory guidance Alternative Provision (2013), allows them to take appropriate qualifications, prevents them from slipping behind their peers in school and allows them to reintegrate successfully back into school as soon as possible

- Address the needs of individual children in arranging provision. ‘Hard and fast’ rules are inappropriate: they may limit the offer of education to children with a given condition and prevent their access to the right level of educational support which they are well enough to receive. Strict rules that limit the offer of education a child receives may also breach statutory requirements.

Monitoring attendance:

- The Attendance Officer will provide a daily list of absentees for SLT Attendance Link
- The Attendance Officer has an agreed list of “first day response to absence” pupils, agreed by the Headteacher and SLT Attendance Link. Families of these pupils will be contacted as early as possible on the first day of absence
- The Attendance Officer will provide analysis of attendance on request
- “VIP” will discuss fortnightly with SLT Attendance Link, issues regarding attendance and highlight individual pupils.
- Pupils will be rewarded for excellent attendance via the school’s rewards system
- The Full Governing Board meeting (termly) will receive reports on attendance
- The Headteacher will inform all Governors of the school’s response to its attendance target on a termly basis at the Full Governors meeting.

Our Independent Education Welfare Officer from VIP Education and SLT link regularly monitor every pupil’s attendance. Where there appears to be a particular problem with attendance, the following procedures are applied.

- A letter is sent to parents informing them of a decline in school attendance and the need for this to improve due to the impact on their child’s education.
- If school attendance continues to decline, a further concern letter is sent to parents.
- If no improvement seen, parents and pupils where appropriate will be invited into a meeting with the Education Welfare Officer to discuss the concerns and to offer support around any possible barriers or problems at home or at school which may be contributing to low attendance. Referrals to wider support services may be offered where appropriate. The discussion held will be documented by the EWO and an action plan to improve school attendance will be devised during the meeting and a review date set if needed.
- If school attendance does not improve, the school may follow the Local Authorities Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for pupils with persistent absence.

Medical Absence

Schools have the responsibility to decide whether an absence can be authorised on medical grounds. If the school has concerns about the level of medical absence that a pupil has incurred, they will contact the parents to discuss it further and to find out whether their GP or other health professional has been contacted.

Parents may be asked to provide evidence that their child is too unwell to attend school by providing a note from a medical professional or a copy of any prescribed medication. If the school do not receive medical evidence, the absences will be unauthorised.

Medical and Dental Appointments

We expect parents to make medical and dental appointments for their children before or after school or during the school holidays whenever possible. If this is not possible, confirmation of the appointment will be required prior to authorising the absence and an M code used on the register to record when the child has attended the appointment.

Children are expected to attend school prior to the appointment and parents are expected to return their children to school following the appointment.

Elective Home Education

If school receives written notification from parents that they wish to home educate their child, school will contact the parent and discuss their reasons in more detail, offering support to deal with any issues raised. If after this time the parent still wishes to home educate their child, the school will inform the Local Authority of the decision to remove the child's name from the admissions register.

Whilst school will not seek to prevent parents from choosing to home educate their child, neither will they seek to encourage them to do this – particularly as a way of avoiding exclusion or due to a poor attendance record. Prior to deciding to home educate, parents are requested to contact Staffordshire Local Authority Elective Home Education department.

Summary

It is vital to a child's progress that they attend school as often as possible and that they are on time.

There are strong and proven links between pupil attendance and educational achievement.

Impact of absence:

Missed number of days	Missed number of sessions	Missed number of weeks	Missed number of lessons
1	2	0	7
3	6	0.5	21
5	10	1	35
7.5	15	1.5	52
10	20	2	70
12.5	25	2.5	87
15	30	3	105
17.5	35	3.5	122

Impact of lateness:

Over a school year:

5 minutes late every day = 3 days absent

15 minutes late every day = 10 days absent

30 minutes late every day = 19 days absent

If parents have any concerns relating to attendance or lateness that they wish to discuss, they should contact their child's class teacher or tutor in the first instance.

School staff are committed to working with parents to ensure any problems are dealt with straight away in order for pupils to feel happy and safe at Walton Priory Middle School and achieve to the best of their ability. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school and are on time.