



Westborough  
High School

Together We Succeed

# Attendance Policy

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Next review: Autumn 2022

## **Introduction:**

1. This 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.
2. 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:**

### **3. Learning and Achievement:**

- a. 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.
- b. 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.
- c. Missing one day per week = missing one year of school over the course of five years. This absence reduces the likelihood of a pupils attainment and progress.
- d. Only 12% of pupils with below 80% school attendance achieve five or more GCSEs at grades 4 or above, including English and Maths, compared to 68% success rate for pupils with attendance greater than 95%.

4. **Safeguarding:** - Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:-
  - a. Attendance
  - b. Behaviour Management
  - c. Health and Safety
  - d. Access to the Curriculum
  - e. Anti- bullying
5. Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

## **Promoting Regular Attendance:**

6. 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:**

7. Give you details on attendance in student reports and parents' meetings;

8. Report to you at least three times each year on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment;
9. Celebrate good attendance during form time, weekly assemblies and by displaying individual and class achievements;
10. Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, sleuth points and prizes, certificates and outings/events.
11. Run promotional events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

### **Parental Responsibility And The Law Relating To Attendance:**

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 suitable:-*

*(a) to age, ability and aptitude and*

*(b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have*

*Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'*

The Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 gives provision for Headteachers and designated staff powers to issue fines to parents who have failed to comply with the provisions of the Education Act 1996.

### **The Law relating to safeguarding**

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

### **Pupil Responsibility:**

Pupils at Westborough are expected to:

12. Attend school regularly and punctually;
13. Adhere to the school's behaviour policy;
14. Hand in any letters of absence or requests for known absence to their form tutor.

### **Understanding types of absence:**

15. Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, by a telephone call or in writing.
16. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as a genuine illness where your child is unable to attend school, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.
17. 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 school and the

Attendance and Pupil Support Service at Kirklees using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- a. parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- b. truancy before or during the school day
- c. absences which have never been properly explained
- d. children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- e. shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- f. day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

18. 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, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse. If this is the case then please contact your child's Year Lead in the first instance.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA):**

19. A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects as they are missing a significant time of their learning which could lead to gaps in knowledge and have a detrimental impact on their progress. In order for each child to achieve their full potential we need parents' fullest support and co-operation.
20. We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.
21. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.
22. All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through the relevant Year Leads, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance.
23. If all the above strategies have failed, parents are asked to attend, with their child, a formal Attendance Panel, with senior staff and the school's Attendance Officer.
24. At this meeting, parents will be asked to sign a formal contract to ensure that their child's attendance will improve.
25. The child's attendance will be closely monitored and reviewed every 2 weeks from this date. If there is no improvement then a referral will be made to the Attendance and Pupil Support Officer.
26. Failure to significantly improve the attendance may result in a Fixed Penalty notice or could result in further legal proceedings.

## **Consequences for poor attendance due to unauthorised leave of absences:**

27. Parents should be aware of:

- a. The possibility of a penalty notice being issued (to each parent for each child);
- b. The possibility of losing the school place, and the likelihood of being re-admitted to the school;
- c. The possibility of prosecution under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 for repeat offences of unauthorised leave of absence.
- d. The possibility of a fine of up to £1,000 and a criminal record for non-payment of a penalty notice should the case go to court.

## **Absence Procedures:**

28. **If your child is absent you must:**

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence, but still contact school on a daily basis if the absence lasts more than one day
- For any planned absence you may send a note with an explanation of the absence with any supporting evidence to the relevant Year Lead or Attendance Officer
- Or, you can call the absence line (ext 223) and leave a voicemail and member of staff will return your call.

29. **If your child is absent we will:**

- Telephone and/or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- May carry out a home visit where no contact is made, there are consecutive days of absence or there is a safeguarding concern;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Pastoral Leaders, Assistant Head teacher if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the Attendance and Pupil Support Service at Kirklees if your child's attendance becomes a cause for concern

## **Telephone numbers:**

30. 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 at least two up to date numbers – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

### Lateness:

32. Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they are missing valuable lesson time. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

### How we manage lateness:

33. The school day starts at **8.25am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

34. If your child is late to school in a morning then a 30 minute detention will be issued at lunchtime the following day.

35. If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Assistant Head teacher or Year Lead, Raising Achievement/Inclusion Leads and/or Attendance Officer 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:

We advise that **you do not plan for your child to be absent from school** without gaining **prior agreement** from the school first. The Headteacher cannot retrospectively authorise absence from school under any circumstances.

36. 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 not to take children away in school time.

37. 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.

38. There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

39. All applications for leave must be made in advance and at the discretion of the school. The school will only authorise leave of absence 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.

40. Absence purely for the purpose of a **family holiday is not an exceptional circumstance**.

41. Exceptional circumstances could include:

- a. Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- b. Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- c. To attend a funeral for a person close to the family.

- d. Where there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances that fall outside of the above criteria, the Headteacher will consult the relevant staff, including seeking guidance from the Local Authority as and when it is deemed necessary.

**Evidence would be required in each case** e.g. for time off to attend a funeral you may even be required to provide a death certificate. The evidence you will be required to provide will be specifically asked for the school, dependent on the reason for absence.

42. If a request meets the above exceptional circumstances but falls within the following times, the Headteacher must be convinced that absence from school is the only option:
  - a. Before or after any half-term during the academic year (applies to all pupils)
  - b. Immediately before and during assessment periods e.g. GCSE /BTECS /Controlled Assessments or any other public examinations. This may also include key internal assessment periods
  - c. At any time during years 9, 10 and 11
  - d. 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.
  - e. When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
  - f. 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.

### **Requesting term time holiday**

43. If you feel that term time absence is unavoidable then all requests should be made via completing a Leave of Absence form which is available from the Attendance Officer, Mr A Cheshire. You should also submit any evidence to support your exceptional circumstances, as well as copies of travel tickets. This should be submitted no later than 21 days before the start of the holiday where possible. A meeting may then be arranged to discuss the matter further.

### **Failure to inform school will result in:**

44. The absence being marked as unauthorised absence

### **Consequences of unauthorised leave of absence**

45. Penalty notices may be used when:
  - a. If parents have not sought permission from the head teacher before taking their child out of school for leave during term-time
  - b. the request is declined and you still take your child out of school
  - c. or when the child does not return by the agreed date with no satisfactory explanation – in this case, **all** the leave will be marked as unauthorised.
  - d. where the individual leave of absence has been recorded by the school as unauthorised in the attendance register on at least 10 consecutive school sessions (5 school days).
46. In the event of a penalty notice being issued, each parent within your household will be issued with a £60 penalty notice for each child you have taken out of school. If a penalty notice remains unpaid after 21 days it will increase to £120. If after 28 days it remains unpaid you may be summonsed to appear before Magistrates to explain why your child has unauthorised school absences and you may be liable for a fine of up to £1000. Support and guidance on attendance is always available and if you have any questions about this, or if you need help to achieve an improvement, then please contact the school's Attendance Officer in the first instance.

47. Where parents continue to take unauthorised leave of absence, despite having previously been issued with a penalty notice, the Local Authority will consider a direct prosecution under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.
48. Also, there is also a possibility that your child may lose their school place, and the likelihood of being re-admitted to the school will have to be in line with the schools admissions protocol based on our admissions policy.

**School targets, projects and special initiatives:**

1. The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.
2. The minimum level of attendance for this school is **96%** and we will keep you regularly updated about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.
3. 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 authority.
4. Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.
5. You will be informed of any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas.
6. The school has in place numerous strategies to encourage and support students and parents in achieving high attendance. The list below is a summary of techniques which may or may not be used to support
  - Daily communication with parents of all absent students
  - Parent meetings in school
  - Local Authority Attendance officer support
  - One to One mentoring with pastoral staff
  - Home visits
  - Weekly and termly Year Group attendance rewards, certificates and prizes for good and improving attendance
7. The school will record any evidence of support provided to students/parents on its Information Management System. This data will be used to support any formal action taken against parents who have failed to engage with the school's positive steps and support offered to secure good attendance of their child.

**Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:**

8. Attendance Officer
9. Raising Achievement/Inclusion Leads
10. Year Leads
11. Assistant Headteacher
12. The Headteacher

## **Evaluation of attendance:**

13. The headteacher, senior leadership team and Raising Achievement Leads/Inclusion Leads shall monitor attendance on a weekly basis and the head shall report to the governing body regularly.

## **Summary:**

14. 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.
15. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

## **Appendix A**

### **Westborough High School and Children Missing Education**

#### **An Overview**

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient, full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

Children missing education are at a significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET later in life.

Therefore, effective information sharing between Westborough staff, parents and the local authority is critical to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age are safe and receiving suitable education.

Parents have a duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age are receiving suitable full-time education.

Schools and local authorities should focus their resources effectively in intervening early in the lives of vulnerable children to help prevent poor outcomes.

If a pupil fails to attend on an agreed date, the school should undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts and consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity. The new Year 7 intake, in particular, is closely monitored and non-arrivals at the start of September – after reasonable enquiries - are referred to CME (children missing in education).

Westborough monitors all pupils' attendance through their daily register on SIMS. Schools should agree with their local authority the intervals at which they will inform the local authority of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly, or have missed ten school days or more without permission. Schools should monitor attendance closely and address poor or irregular attendance.

Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive days, the pupil can be removed from the admission register when the school and CME (after an official completed referral) have failed after jointly making reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.

Parents are encouraged to request in writing should they require leave of absence for their child during term-time. If a request is rejected, the parents are warned, in writing, that more than twenty days' absence could result in the pupil being removed from the register.

Parents of those pupils - who suddenly 'disappear' from school and return to their home country are contacted by telephone and home visits to try and ascertain the pupils' exact whereabouts. Letters are written to the family warning that more than twenty days' absence could result in the pupil being removed from the register. These letters – as well as an official referral – are forwarded onto CME after the twentieth day of absence and after the pupil has been taken off roll.

All schools have a safeguarding duty in respect of their pupils, and as part of this should investigate any unexplained absences. A number of staff make daily phone calls to ascertain pupil absence. Unexplained absences are always investigated thoroughly.

It is important that all pupils' basic details and contact information is accurate and kept up to date. Although this is done on an official annual basis, Westborough also regularly encourages parents to inform the school of any changes whenever they occur. This assists both the school and local authority when making enquiries to locate children missing education.

When a parent of a pupil notifies the school that the pupil is, or will be in the future, registered at another school, the school must record the name of the new school and the start date.

Schools must notify the local authority when a pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register, as soon as the ground for removal is met and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is removed from the register.

All schools are required to notify the local authority within five days when a pupils' name is added to the admission register. Schools will need to provide the local authority with all the information held within the admission register about the pupil.

## **Reasonable Enquiries**

The term 'reasonable enquiries' grants schools and local authorities a degree of flexibility in decision-making, particularly as the steps that need to be taken in a given case will vary. The term 'reasonable' also makes clear that there is a limit to what the school and local authority is expected to do.

The expectation is that the school and the local authority will have in place procedures designed to carry out reasonable enquiries. When the whereabouts of a child is unclear or unknown, it is

reasonable to expect that the school will complete and record one or more of the following actions:

- Make contact with the parent, relatives, neighbours using known contact details
- Home visits made by appropriate staff, following local guidance concerning risk assessment and if appropriate make enquiries with neighbours, landlords and relatives and other stakeholders who are involved
- Letters – mainly warning parents that unauthorised leave of absence could result in a pupil being taken off the admissions register
- Check local databases within the local authority (Data Quality Team etc)
- Check with any local authority and school to which a child may have moved

This list is not exhaustive or prescriptive, and so schools (and the LA) should treat each case on its individual merits and use their judgement, ensuring they have taken into account all of the facts of the case.

Making these enquiries may not always lead to establishing the location of the child, but will provide a steer on what action should be taken next.

Schools should record that they have completed these procedures.

## **Removal From The Register**

A pupil's name can only be removed from the admission register if the school and the local authority have failed to establish the pupil's whereabouts after jointly making reasonable enquiries. Local authorities and schools should agree roles and responsibilities locally in relation to making joint enquiries.

If there is evidence to suggest the child has moved to a different local authority area, contact should be made with the named person in the new authority using secure communication methods. The local authority should maintain a record of the child's details until they are located or attain school leaving age.

The CTF (common transfer file) guidance makes clear that all schools maintained by a local authority in England are required when a pupil ceases to be registered at their school, and becomes registered at another school in England or Wales, to send a CTF (common transfer file) to the new school.

Where a parent notifies the school in writing that they are home educating, the school must delete the child's name from the admission register and inform the local authority. However, where parents orally indicate that they intend to withdraw their child to be home educated, the school should consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.