



Attendance Policy

July 2018

Waverley Education Foundation is committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all.

We will endeavor to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

School attendance is subject to various education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education

Each year the school will set attendance/absence targets.

The school will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals.

This policy will contain within it the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance targets.

Promoting attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child.

It is the expectation of the school that all pupils **will** achieve at least **97%** attendance. There are a variety of reasons for pupils missing school. Some are unavoidable, but we would ask that you support us in ensuring that your child's attendance meets both the school and the government's expectations. Any problems with regular attendance, especially any concerns about possible bullying or learning difficulties are best sorted out by the school, the parents and the pupil at an early stage. We will closely monitor your child's attendance and alert you if we feel there is an issue. The school undertakes a wide range of measures to support pupils where attendance at school is an issue. Where there may be an issue and we fail to see an improvement, it may be necessary to make a referral to an appropriate external agency to ensure the pupil receives the support required to bring about an improvement.

School Procedures

Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity. Only the Executive Principal or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

The coding for any absences will be in accordance with the guidance provided by the Department for Education.

Parents/Guardians are expected to:

- ensure their children attend school and arrive on time every day.
- promote a good attitude to learning by ensuring their children attend school in the correct uniform and with the basic equipment required for lessons.
- arrange medical and dental appointments out of school time wherever possible.
- telephone by 8:40.a.m to inform the school on the first day of absence for their child.
- provide a written explanation of absence, including dates of absence as soon as their child returns to school.
- work in partnership with the school and other agencies in the best interests of their child; this includes informing the school about significant influences and changes in the child's life, which may impact on learning.

Absence from school

FIRST DAY ABSENCE

Parents/Guardians inform the school by 8:40.a.m if their child is absent that day. If a pupil is absent and the school have had no contact from home, then the attendance officer will personally call the numbers that are held on the school's system. Any responses to the calls will then be monitored by the attendance officer who will update the pupil's registration code.

Second Day Absence

If a child is still absent and there has been no contact from home the attendance officer will personally call the numbers again held for the pupil and notify Lead DSL. A home visit is arranged by the attendance officer and the relevant Achievement Coordinator. If no-one is present at the home a letter is left stating that the family must contact the school immediately.

If there is a serious concern regarding the pupil's absence a referral is made to Social Services.

Fifth Day Absence

Any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 5 consecutive days will be notified to the Local Authority, by submitting a referral to the Child Missing Education (CME) team. The school will include details of the action that they have taken.

Absence notes

Notes received from parents explaining absence should be kept for the remainder of the academic year. If there are attendance concerns about the pupil, that may require further investigation, then the notes may need to be retained for a longer period. If a pupil regularly misses time from school for illness or medical reasons a letter will be sent to parents/guardians stating that medical evidence will be needed to authorise any further absence and a referral may be made to the school nurse.

Unauthorised Absence from School

*Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. These are an **offence** by the parent. Such circumstances include:*

- *A pupil not attending school to go shopping for school clothes*
- *A pupil not attending school as it is their birthday or the birthday of a family member*
- *A pupil not attending school as the family have gone to the airport to meet a visiting relative*
- *A pupil not attending school due to attending a hospital appointment for another family member*
- *A pupil not attending school due to the family having returned late in the previous evening from a family holiday*
- *A pupil not attending school as they are looking after younger siblings*
- *A pupil attends a medical appointment in the morning but then fails to return to school for afternoon lessons*

LATENESS

Morning registration will take place at the start of school at 8.40 am. Any pupil arriving after registers close will be marked as having an unauthorised absence (U) unless there is an acceptable explanation i.e. school transport was delayed. In cases for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered.

Pupils arriving after the start of school but before the end of the registration period will be coded as late before registers close (L).

The law treats persistent lateness in the same way as irregular attendance and parents may be prosecuted by the Local Authority.

Medical Appointments

We do appreciate that it is often difficult for parents / carers to obtain written confirmation of medical appointments. Parents / carers can obtain 'Medical Authorisation Cards' from school to take with them to the doctors to confirm their child has attended a medical appointment. (see below) Parents / carers must ensure the card is stamped, dated and signed by the practice to confirm their child has attended a medical appointment.

To Whom it may concern

Waverley Education Foundation is committed to working with pupils and parents / carers to improve pupil attendance and achievement by reducing absence. Please confirm by signature or practice stamp that (insert pupil name) _____ has attended the surgery or practice today.

Is this condition likely to impact further on her school attendance? YES / NO

Signed _____ Date _____

Practice name / stamp:

Safeguarding

The school reserves the right to invite parents into school to discuss any attendance issues that raise potential safeguarding concerns, i.e. – female genital mutilation, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, forced marriage, radicalisation. In addition, if the school suspects that a pupil may be at potential risk as a result of their absence from school the safeguarding team reserve the right to refer these concerns to the appropriate external agencies, i.e. – social care, police. The school will inform parents / carers if a referral is to be made. However, this may not appropriate in every circumstance depending on the nature of the safeguarding concern and a referral may be made without informing the parent / carer.

Children Missing from Education

The school recognizes that when a child goes missing from school it is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect, i.e. – sexual abuse or exploitation. The school follows the Birmingham City Council policy and procedures "Children Missing from Education Sept 2017". Under section 8h of the Education Regulations Act (2006) the school will make 'reasonable' enquiries into the location of pupils with 5 days continuous unauthorised absence or for those who fail to return from leave of absence granted during term time. A referral will be made to the Child Missing Education team to be investigated further by their safeguarding panel and appropriate interventions taken at that level, i.e. – refer to police. The school reserves the right, however, to contact relevant agencies to seek advice (Children's Social Care, Police Safe and Well-being referral, CME) if any child is absent from school for more than five days without communication from parents. Every attempt will be made to communicate with parents to ensure the child is safe and well, including home visits by the school. The school will contact relevant agencies after two days absence without confirmation from parents / carers if the child is subject to a 'Child Protection / Child in Need' plan or considered vulnerable in other ways.

There are many circumstances where a child may become missing from education, as outlined below;

- Pupils at risk of harm / neglect (school will follow standard Child Protection procedures for referrals to social care / police)
- Children of Gypsy, Roma or Traveller families (school will inform local authority when a GRT pupil leaves the school without identifying a new destination school).
- Families of Armed Forces (school will contact MOD Children's Education Advisory Service for advice on making arrangements for continuity of education)
- Missing children / runaways (direct referral to Children's Services and Police)
- Children supervised in the Youth Justice system
- Children who cease to attend a school

When a pupil returns from a period of extended absence appropriate daily attendance checks will be carried out and their attendance, behaviour, emotional and physical well-being will be monitored closely by the safeguarding team in school. Parents / carers will be invited into school with the pupil to meet a DSL as part of the reintegration programme and relevant support will be offered to the pupil / family as necessary.

Reluctance to go to school:

Sometimes pupils seem anxious about leaving home to go to school. They may tell you that they feel unwell or give another reason to not attend. You may notice that they are worried from things that they say e.g. that they do not want to do particular subjects, feel that they have no friends or are being bullied. If this is the case, please contact the school as soon as possible to speak to the relevant Achievement Coordinator/Learning Coach.

Home Education

Under the DFE guidance on attendance (Nov 2016); 'Parents have a duty to ensure their child of compulsory school age receives suitable full-time education, but this does not have to be at a school'. If a parent wishes to withdraw a child from the school the child will be known as 'Electively Home-Educated'. Any parent wishing to withdraw their child from the school will be required to confirm this in writing to the Executive Principal (Mr Hanif). The school will forward this letter to the Local Authority and the child will be removed from the Admission register at Waverley School/Waverley Studio College. The Local Authority will then determine whether or not to accept this new arrangement or challenge it. However, parents are unable to withdraw their child from school if they are subject to a 'School Attendance Order'.

Children with Special Educational Needs statements (Education, Health and Care Plans) can be home educated. Where the statements set out special educational provision that the child should receive at home, the local authority is under a duty to arrange that provision. The local authority must review the child's statement / EHC Plan annually.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN TERM TIME

Under the DFE 'Advice on School Attendance' parents can **no longer** expect schools to authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday for up to 10 school days per year. The Executive Principal may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are '**exceptional circumstances**'. For example, there may have been bereavement in the family or other serious circumstances or the Executive Principal may be aware that a family is under strain and in need of time together.

The Executive Principal will also determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. **From this perspective leave of absence in term time is no longer a parental right and will only be authorised at the Headteacher's discretion.**

Under DFE guidelines the school may consider taking legal action against a parent/s who takes leave of absence without the Executive Principal's permission and apply for a Penalty Notice Fine (£60-£120) to be issued by the Court Section or other legal proceedings by the Local Authority. The £60 Penalty Notice will need to be paid in full separately by both parents within 21 days and will rise to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. Failure to pay this penalty notice may result in prosecution.

If parents wish to take their child out of school during term time we advise parents to send a letter into school outlining the reasons for and dates of the leave of absence.

The school will seek advice from the local authority if a pupil fails to return from an extended family holiday during term time and the school and local authority have made reasonable enquiries but cannot locate the pupil. This applies to leaves of absence that are both authorised and unauthorised by the school. As a result, the school may remove the pupil from roll under such circumstances.

The school will follow the guidelines outlined by the '**FAST-Track to Attendance**' campaign if a pupil has **20 sessions (10 days)** or more unauthorised absence in a **12-month period**.

'FAST-Track to Attendance' Quick Guide

Concerning levels of pupil absence either authorised or unauthorised

Step One – Early help including 'Signs of Safety and Wellbeing' (3 houses form) with the child

At least one session of unauthorised absence

Step Two – Invite parents to a School Attendance Review Meeting (SARM) and hold the SARM

Further unauthorised absence adding up to 10 sessions in total over the previous 12 calendar months whether the parent attended the SARM or not

Step Three – Send 'Formal Warning Notice' to each parent individually with an up to date attendance printout – this will be your evidence

MONITOR

At least 10 further sessions of unauthorised absence within 12 school weeks of the warning notice being issued

Step Four – Refer to ELIT

If there continues to be no improvement in attendance, absences remain unauthorized and a total of 20 unauthorised sessions is reached, the school will complete the FAST-Track prosecution paperwork and begin to undertake the necessary legal action against the parents. This will initially result in a **Penalty Notice Fine**. This will be issued to both parents even if one of the parents does not live with the pupil. Each parent will be issued with a £60 fine and will have 21 days to make payment. This will rise to £120 if the initial fine is paid between 22 and 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority. **There is no right of appeal by parents against the penalty notice**. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice Fine will result in further legal action being taken by the courts, with the maximum fine currently £2,500 or three months in prison.

Persistent Absence [PA]

The law states that your child must attend school on every occasion that it is open unless there is a reason that enables the Executive Principal to authorise the absence under the Regulations. The law also states that it is parents' responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly.

The school has a responsibility to reduce the number of pupils whose attendance is below 90% over the school year. Pupils with attendance below 90% may fall into the 'Persistent Absentee' category. This is particularly relevant if any of the child's absences are unauthorised.

According to the DFE guidance for Parents (Jan 2015); 'If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them the parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority'. In addition, 'Local authorities have the power to prosecute parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order (section 443 of the Education Act 1996) or fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at a school (section 444 of the Education Act 1996)'

All pupils whose attendance level falls below 90% will be subject to an action plan to support their return to full attendance. These action plans will be set up by the attendance officer. The action plan will include engagement with all parties who can support the pupil's attendance.

Frequent Absence

Within the school it is the responsibility of the attendance officer to be aware of and bring attention to, any emerging attendance concerns. In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem as soon as possible. This may be through:

- early contact with parents with either Achievement Coordinator/Learning Coach or attendance officer
- formal meetings
- referral to the school nurse or mentor
- referral to the EWS
- implementation of a Social Service referral
- referral to Think Family
- spotlight or leave in term time programme
- penalty notices

A Welcome Back

It is important that on return from an absence all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to the other pupils.

ATTENDANCE AWARDS

The school will use the following system to reward pupils who have good or improving attendance.

Secondary/Studio College- Certificates and badges are presented each term to reward those who achieve excellent attendance

Primary- 100% certificates per half term, a badge and a small gift per term. Medals and trophies will be given at the end of the year

Improving attendance – WHAT PARENTS CAN DO:

1. Try to make all medical appointments (doctors, dentist and hospital) out of school time. Obviously, this is not always possible but in such cases, try to minimise the disruption to the day by getting an early morning appointment so that your child can attend afterwards OR a late afternoon appointment so that they can complete most of their timetable before leaving.
2. Encourage your child to take responsibility for being on time for school. Try to make sure they have an alarm clock that is reliable. Make sure that they have a realistic bedtime and will not be too tired to get up in the morning for school. Bags, books and other equipment should be prepared the night before. Regularly checking your child's planner can help you to do this.
3. Discourage your child from staying overnight with friends during the week. This sometimes leads to them both being late (or not attending at all) the next day.
4. Leave of absence during term time is not a parental right. If there are special or exceptional circumstances, please contact the Executive Principal and a decision will be made if the absence can be authorised or not.
6. Encourage your child to come to school even if they are feeling slightly unwell. Many aches and pains are forgotten when they are with friends and the school will contact you if it becomes necessary.
7. Talk positively about going to school – "What was good about school today?" "Did anything funny happen?"
8. Take any worries seriously but do not show that you are unduly concerned. Believe that they will be sorted out. Contact your Child's Achievement Coordinator/Learning Coach before the concerns escalate.

Improving attendance – WHAT SCHOOL DOES:

1. Submit the registers on time in accordance with the law twice a day.
2. First day calls to parents/carers who have not contacted the school, to inform of the absence of their child.
3. Maintains records and monitors attendance of pupils on a regular basis.
4. Authorises absences in accordance with the government guidelines. Please note that **only** the school can authorise absence.
5. Contacts parents / carers when the attendance falls below acceptable levels and / or when particular patterns of absence are causing concerns.
6. Provides access to staff with whom attendance related issues can be discussed.
7. Works with external agencies to maintain good attendance and to support the pupil / family with any issues that may affect attendance and punctuality to school.
8. Provides re – integration support for pupils returning from absence.
9. Maintains a range of strategies to encourage good attendance by means of rewards.
10. Works with relevant external agencies if a pupils' attendance becomes a concern, i.e. – Social Care, CAMHS, Pupil Support Service, Police, YOT.
11. Uses the Spotlight campaign as a means of working with parents to resolve issues affecting attendance.

CATEGORISATION OF ABSENCE

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.

1. Unauthorised Absence
2. Authorised Absence
3. Approved Educational Activity

1. Unauthorised absence

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason.

2. Authorised absence

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

3. Approved Educational Activity

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school.

Note Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.

This would include:

- Work experience placements
- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education off site

If a pupil is receiving education off site or is attending at a school where they are dual registered with, the school will liaise with the other education provider to check on attendance.

THE REGISTRATION SYSTEM

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

| CODE | DESCRIPTION | MEANING |
|------|--|-------------------------------------|
| / | Present (AM) | Present |
| \ | Present (PM) | Present |
| B | Educated off site (NOT Dual registration) | Approved Education Activity |
| C | Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description) | Authorised absence |
| D | Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment) | Approved Education Activity |
| E | Excluded (no alternative provision made) | Authorised absence |
| F | Extended family holiday (agreed) | Authorised absence |
| G | Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement) | Unauthorized absence |
| H | Family holiday (agreed) | Authorised absence |
| I | Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments) | Authorised absence |
| J | Interview | Approved Education Activity |
| L | Late (before registers closed) | Present |
| M | Medical/Dental appointments | Authorised absence |
| N | No reason yet provided for absence | Unauthorized absence |
| O | Unauthorized absence (not covered by any other code/description) | Unauthorized absence |
| P | Approved sporting activity | Approved Education Activity |
| R | Religious observance | Authorised absence |
| S | Study leave | Authorised absence |
| T | Traveller absence | Authorised absence |
| U | Late (after registers closed) | Unauthorized absence |
| V | Educational visit or trip | Approved Education Activity |
| W | Work experience | Approved Education Activity |
| X | Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils | Not counted in possible attendances |
| Y | Enforced closure | Not counted in possible attendances |
| Z | Pupil not yet on roll | Not counted in possible attendances |
| # | School closed to pupils | Not counted in possible attendances |

Record preservation

We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records whilst they are attending plus 1 year.

Attendance Targets

The school will set attendance targets each year. A system for analysing performance towards the targets will be established and Senior Management and the Attendance Officer will be responsible for overseeing this work. Targets will relate to national averages.

The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

- [a] To his age, ability and aptitude and
 - [b] To any special needs he may have.
- either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Register and Admission Roll keeping.

The legal requirements are found in:

The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006

Attendance Targets

The legal requirements are found in:

The Education (School Attendance Targets) (England) Regulations 2007

Guidance documents on attendance.

The following DfE documents are used to guide attendance recording.

Absence and Attendance codes (Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities)

Keeping Pupil Registers (Guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulations)

These and other guidance documents are available on the DfE website.