

Westdale Junior School's Attendance Policy

We believe that:

- children need to attend school regularly so they can take full advantage of the educational opportunities available.
- poor attendance rates and persistent lateness undermines the educational process and leads to educational disadvantage.

Aims

Therefore, we aim to:

- take all reasonable steps to maximise attendance rates
- actively discourage late arrival
- be consistent in the application of the school's registration and attendance procedures

Legal Framework

- It is recognised that parents, schools and Local Authorities have statutory responsibilities with regard to school attendance.

Parental Responsibility

- Parents are required to ensure that their children receive efficient, full time education and are therefore primarily responsible for ensuring that children attend and stay at school.
- Thus, parents are responsible for ensuring that their children: attend school regularly, arrive at school on time, in uniform, or appropriate clothing, and in a condition to learn. Are absent only for reasons that can be authorised.
- Parents are required to inform the school of the reason for any absence and the likely return date, as soon as possible.

Registration

The school keeps an attendance register for each class in which pupils are marked present or absent at the beginning of each school session.

Reporting Absence

- Parents are asked to make contact on the first day of absence, where possible - by note, personal contact, telephone call or e-mail - informing the school of the reason for the absence and/or nature of any illness. They are also asked to inform the school if there is a likely return date. If the school has not heard from the family by 9.30 am, a member of staff will attempt to telephone home to ascertain the reason for absence.
- Notes received by teachers are dated and initialled and sent to the office to be retained until the end of the academic year. The absence is logged as either Authorised Absence or Unauthorised Absence.
- Telephone messages and personal contacts made to the school office are noted on an Absence Sheet and subsequently logged as either Authorised Absence or Unauthorised Absence.
- Personal contacts made with class teachers should subsequently be logged on an Absence Record slip and placed in the Register Folder, then logged in the absence record book.
- Any absence that may be considered Unauthorised Absence should only be recorded after discussion with the Head Teacher. Any queries as to whether to Authorise an absence or not should be referred to the Head Teacher.

Authorising Absence

- The law states that only the school can approve absence, not parents. If doubts remain about the explanation offered - or where no explanation is forthcoming at all - the absence must be treated as unauthorised.
- Codes used to denote absence are shown in the appendix at the end of this policy.
- Absence will be authorised immediately or retrospectively if:
 1. the pupil was absent due to illness
 2. the pupil was prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause
 3. the pupil had leave of absence granted by the Head Teacher
 4. the absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong
 5. the absence was due to a medical or dental appointment.
- In addition, the school *will consider authorising* absence in the following cases:
 1. family bereavement/attending wedding
 2. moving house
 3. external music examination
 4. special tuition/events.
- The school *will not authorise* absence in the following cases:

1. shopping during school hours
 2. children looking after brothers and sisters (unless genuinely unavoidable and as a one-off)
 3. children minding the house during school hours
 4. children avoiding aspects of the curriculum (games, swimming, visits, etc) whether condoned by parents or not.
 5. all holiday leave in term time
- Parents wishing to request leave of absence for exceptional circumstances: In each case the HT will consider the request, writing to the family explaining that the exceptional absence days will be recorded as either authorised or unauthorised and explaining the reasons.

Lateness

- We recognise that persistent lateness is:
 - detrimental to the child's education
 - administratively disruptive
 - a poor preparation for future schooling and adult life.
- Morning school starts at 8:50 a.m. and the registers are closed at 9:15 a.m.
- If pupils arrive between 8:55 and 9:15 a.m. they receive a late mark **L**.
- Pupils arriving after 9:15 a.m. sign in late at the office and receive a mark which denotes 'Late after the register is closed' **@** which counts as an **unauthorised absence**.
- Afternoon registration starts at 1:00 p.m. and the registers are closed at 1:15 p.m. pupils arriving during the period 1:20 p.m. and 1:25 p.m. receive a late mark **L**.
- Pupils arriving after 1:25 p.m. sign in late at the office and receive a mark which denotes 'Late after the register is closed' **@** which counts as an **unauthorised absence**.
- Parents whose children regularly arrive late will receive a warning letter from school. Cases may be referred to the Attendance Officer.

Mid-Session Arrivals/Departures

- It is recognised that children may arrive or depart mid-session for a variety of reasons which may be authorised:
 1. illness or accident in school resulting in a child going home
 2. medical or dental appointments
 3. unavoidable delays or reasons to leave early.

- Pupils present for registration who leave early, or for part of a session, should be noted on the Mid-Session Arrivals/Departure Log in the school office for purposes of emergency evacuation. *The register itself is not altered.*
- Pupils not present for registration who return later from an appointment should be noted on the Mid-Session Arrivals/Departure Log in the school office for purposes of emergency evacuation. The register is subsequently amended to authorise the absence or record an unauthorised absence.

Monitoring Attendance and Punctuality

- The **computer print-outs** will be examined at the end of each month to look for:
 - patterns of unexplained absences
 - any persistent lateness
 - any prolonged absence (*Local Authority informed if more than two school weeks; note made on child's record card.*)
 - any unexplained patterns of authorised absence

Summaries of Attendance rates are prepared termly or annually for all children showing:

- the total number of pupils on roll at any time during the period
- the total number of possible pupils sessions
- the number of authorised absences and the number of children affected
- the number of unauthorised absences and the number of children affected
- the percentage of pupils sessions lost by authorised and unauthorised absences.

Year on Year summaries are retained for comparison and class registers are retained for a minimum of three years.

Attendance and Punctuality Reports are given termly to governors, outlining the attendance and punctuality rates together with comparisons.

Individual Attendance and Punctuality Reports are sent home with every child praising those with high levels of attendance and punctuality and commenting on those with unsatisfactory levels.

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